

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, May 12

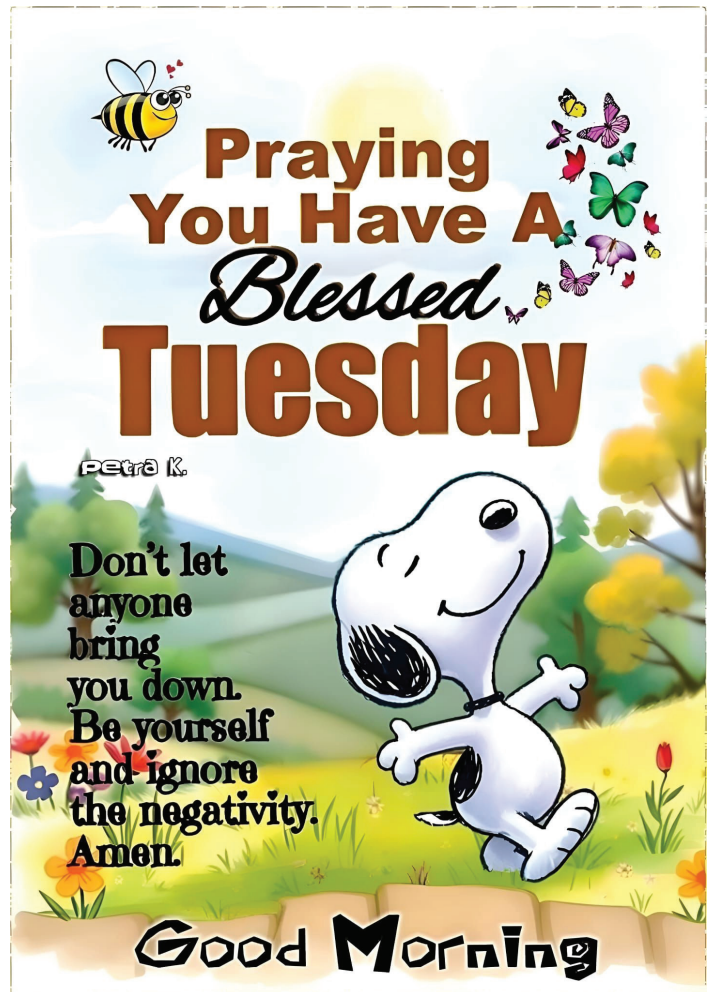
School Board meeting, 7 a.m.
Biogirls at Elementary Gymnastics, 3:45 p.m.
Girls softball at Milbank, JV at 4:30 followed by varsity.
JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena
Emmanuel Lutheran Council, 6 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, May 13

Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., elementary gym
JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena
Baseball, Softball and t-ball parent meeting, 6 p.m.
Groton Community Center

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Thursday, May 14

NEC Track Meet at Milbank, 2 p.m.
Fifth grade GBB, 4 p.m., elementary gym
Middle School Track Meet at Warner, 4 p.m.
Pickleball, 6 p.m., elementary gym
Groton Lions Club meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main

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1440

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

Promising HIV Treatment

Researchers are due to present a report today finding that a single infusion of HIV-fighting molecules could suppress the incurable virus to undetectable levels. Modeled after a treatment for leukemia, the approach could mark the closest researchers have come to a one-and-done treatment for the disease, but it remains years away from widespread availability.

Scientists extracted and engineered seven patients' immune cells to carry two molecules that bind to HIV and kill infected cells. One also defends the immune cells from becoming infected. The day the cells were reinjected into their bodies, the patients stopped taking antiretroviral drugs—the standard treatment for HIV often involving multiple pills daily.

Patients who began antiretroviral therapy within months of their diagnosis saw remission lasting up to 92 weeks when switching to the infusion, while those who received initial treatment later appeared to respond less effectively to the infusion.

Eurovision Kicks Off

The 70th Eurovision Song Contest begins today in Vienna, Austria. The event is among the most-watched live entertainment broadcasts, drawing 166 million viewers last year.

Now the world's longest-running annual global TV music competition, Eurovision began in 1956 as a post-World War II effort to unite Europe through live TV broadcasting (with seven countries and 14 songs). Today, it features countries across Europe and some outside the continent, including Australia and Israel. The contest has evolved into a mix of pop spectacle, national identity, and over-the-top theatrical performances, launching the international careers of stars like ABBA and Celine Dion.

The event has drawn renewed political scrutiny over Israel's participation amid the war in Gaza; Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Spain have withdrawn from the competition in protest. Meanwhile, a new report alleges Israel sought to influence voting in recent years as part of a broader public diplomacy effort.

Let the Children Play

The nation's leading pediatricians group yesterday urged schools to protect free play for children and teens in its first guidance on recess in 13 years.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says recess is critical to academic, physical, social, and emotional development, as many schools cut it back to prioritize test performance. New research suggests downtime helps students retain information, with experts recommending at least 20 minutes of recess daily and additional short breaks. Up to 40% of US school districts have reduced or eliminated recess since the mid-2000s. Among schools offering recess, the duration ranges from less than 10 minutes to over an hour. In countries such as the UK, Japan, and Denmark, students commonly get breaks every 45 to 50 minutes.

About a dozen states require some daily recess. Oklahoma became the latest state last month to expand its recess requirement, passing a law that increases mandatory unstructured playtime to 40 minutes each day.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Dua Lipa sues Samsung for \$15M for using her likeness to sell TVs without her permission; see the advertisement in question.

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Savannah Guthrie to host new Wordle game show on NBC, produced by Jimmy Fallon and The New York Times.

Cannes Film Festival begins today; explore 23 of the most eagerly awaited films.

Seven-story Beatles museum to open next year at the band's former London headquarters, 3 Savile Row.

Science & Technology

Google says it stopped one of the first cyberattacks to use AI to identify and exploit a previously unknown software vulnerability; researchers warn AI capabilities may be outpacing cybersecurity defenses.

Gruesome fatal wounds on gray seal pups—once blamed on ship propellers and sharks—are traced to adult male gray seals, which may be seeking nutrients from high-calorie blubber.

Suckerfish evade predators by disappearing into a manta ray's rear end, a newly observed behavior coined "cloacal diving"; finding suggests the relationship between the two species may be more parasitic than previously believed.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq +0.1%).

AI chipmaker Cerebras seeks \$4.8B in upsized initial public offering.

Alphabet to sell Japanese yen-denominated bonds for first time to fund AI efforts; offering size hasn't been disclosed.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella takes the stand in Elon Musk's lawsuit alleging OpenAI betrayed its non-profit roots for Microsoft funding.

Politics & World Affairs

Man charged with attempting to kill President Donald Trump at last month's White House Correspondents' Association dinner pleads not guilty to all charges; next pretrial hearing scheduled for June 29.

President Donald Trump will travel to China this week, accompanied by 16 CEOs, including Elon Musk and Tim Cook.

Family of a victim in last year's Florida State University shooting files lawsuit accusing OpenAI of complicity in the attack, citing suspect's use of ChatGPT.

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Groton Places Third at Home Invitational

The Groton Area girls golf team turned in a solid performance on their home course Monday, placing third at the Groton Invitational held at Olive Grove Golf Course.

Groton Tigers finished with a team score of 398, trailing only champion Aberdeen Roncalli Cavaliers (351) and runner-up Sisseton Redmen (364). Also at the meet were Madison Redfield and Milbank.

Groton was led by Carlee Johnson, who tied for fifth overall with an 18-over-par 90. Claire Schuelke also cracked the top 10 for the Tigers, carding a 93 to place eighth individually.

Halee Harder added a 107 for Groton, while Rylie Rose finished with a 108 as the Tigers had four golfers place among the top 13 individuals at the meet.

Aberdeen Roncalli's Mackenzie Wegehaupt and Claire Crawford shared medalist honors after each shot an 85. Sisseton's Kinsley Heath was third with an 88, while Roncalli's Ava Danielson followed in fourth at 89.



Groton Area golfers at the Groton golf meet were Claire Schuelke, Rylie Rose, Halee Harder and Carlee Johnson. (Courtesy Photo)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Strokes																					
GOLD - Ladies Tee / SLOPE®: 120 / Course Rating™: 70.4 / Olive Grove Golf Course																					
Yardage	310	309	418	132	334	285	305	175	405	2673	310	309	418	132	334	285	305	175	405	2673	5346
Par	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72
Carlee Johnson	8	5	6	4	3	6	4	4	5	45	4	5	6	6	5	4	5	4	6	45	90
Claire Schuelke	7	5	5	3	5	6	6	3	5	45	7	5	6	3	5	7	5	4	6	48	93
Halee Harder	5	5	7	5	6	5	4	5	10	52	5	7	5	6	7	7	5	4	9	55	107
Rylie Rose	8	6	6	4	4	6	5	3	7	49	7	6	7	4	5	9	5	7	9	59	108

 Starting Hole
 Eagle or Better
 Birdie
 Par
 Bogey
 Double Bogey or Worse

GROTON AREA

TIGERS

SOFTBALL

VS.

TUESDAY,

MAY 12

AT

MILBANK

JV AT 4:30 P.M.

VARSITY

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Record-Setting Performances Highlight Groton Area's Strong Showing at NEC Junior High Meet

The Groton Area middle school track teams turned in a memorable performance Monday during the Northeast Conference Meet at Doney Field, highlighted by relay championships, individual conference titles, and several record-breaking efforts by the Tiger boys and girls.

Milbank captured the eighth-grade boys team championship with 158.67 points, while Groton Area finished a strong second with 111 points. The Tigers also placed eighth in the seventh-grade boys standings with 31 points.

The highlight of the day came in the eighth-grade boys 4x200-meter relay where the Groton quartet of Trey Tietz, Trayce Schelle, Ivan Schwan, and Ryder Schwan delivered a record-setting performance. The Tigers not only broke the Groton Area eighth-grade school record, but also shattered the Northeast Conference

Meet record with a winning time of 1:43.10.

The previous school and NEC Meet record of 1:44.44 was set in 2025 by Ryder Schwan, Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, and Anthony Tracy.



It was a Record-Breaking Day for the Tigers in Groton for the Junior High Northeast Conference Track Meet! The 8th Grade 4 x 200m Relay Team of Ivan Schwan, Trey Tietz, Trayce Schelle and Ryder Schwan not only broke the 8th Grade School Record, but also broke the 8th Grade NEC Meet Record with a time of 1:43.10. The record was previously held by Ryder Schwan, Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, and Anthony Tracy in 2025 at 1:44.44. (Courtesy Photo)



Kinley Sandness snagged the 7th Grade 200m Dash School Record by over a second by clocking a time of 28.20. It was previously held by McKenzie Menzia in 2012, with a time of 29.26! (Courtesy Photo)

Photo)

Ryder Schwan also etched his name into the record books individually during the eighth-grade boys 200-meter dash. Schwan broke both the Groton Area eighth-grade school record and the NEC Meet record after clocking a winning time of 23.80 seconds. The previous mark of 24.24 had been held by Lucas Hinman.

Schwan added another conference championship in the eighth-grade 100-meter dash with a winning time of 11.5 seconds.

Groton's eighth-grade boys dominated the relay events throughout the meet, collecting conference titles in the 4x100 relay, 4x200 relay, 4x400 relay, and sprint medley relay.

The 4x100 relay team of Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Trey Tietz, and Ryder Schwan claimed first place in 49.9 seconds.

In the 4x400 relay, Trey Tietz, Liam Lord, Keegan Kucker, and Kyson Kucker crossed the finish line first in 3:57.7. Groton completed the relay sweep in the sprint medley relay as Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Liam Johnson, and Trey Tietz posted a winning time of 1:54.5.

Groton also collected several additional individual conference championships in the boys division.

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Ivan Schwan captured titles in both the seventh-grade 100-meter dash in 12.5 seconds and the 200-meter dash in 25.8.

Kyson Kucker had a standout performance in the distance races, winning the eighth-grade 400-meter dash in 55.8 seconds and the 800-meter run in 2:12.1. Keegan Kucker added a third-place finish in the 400 at 59.9, while Liam Lord placed fifth in 1:02.1.

Trayce Schelle earned another conference title for the Tigers after clearing 5-foot-2 to win the eighth-grade high jump.

Additional strong finishes for Groton included Quinton Flores taking second in the seventh-grade 800 meters in 2:35.3, Trayce Schelle placing sixth in the eighth-grade 100 meters, and Liam Johnson finishing sixth in the discus.

In the girls division, Groton Area placed seventh in the seventh-grade team standings with 55 points and fourth in the eighth-grade standings with 54 points.



In the 8th Grade Boys Division, Ryder Schwan captured the 200m Dash School 8th Grade Record and the 8th Grade NEC Meet Record by clocking a time of 23.80! The record was previously held by Lucas Hinman with a time of 24.24. (Courtesy Photo)

The Tiger girls also enjoyed a record-setting day on their home track.

Groton's eighth-grade 4x100 relay team of Libby Johnson, Andi Iverson, Rowan Patterson, and Kinley Sandness broke the eighth-grade school record while winning the conference title in 56.58 seconds. The previous school record of 57.64 had stood since 2013 and was set by Katie Koehler, Audrey Wanner, Heather Lone, and McKenzie Menzia.

Kinley Sandness also rewrote the record book in the 200-meter dash. Sandness clocked a time of 28.20 to break the seventh-grade school record by more than a second. The previous mark of 29.26 was set by McKenzie Menzia in 2012.

The Tiger girls collected three conference relay championships during the meet.

The seventh-grade 4x200 relay team of Charli Jacobsen, Zoe Olson, Addison Steffes, and Gracie Borg claimed first place in 2:06.5.

Groton also won the eighth-grade sprint medley relay as Rowan Patterson, Libby Johnson, Andi Iverson, and Kinley Sandness combined for a first-place time of 2:09.9.

Individually, Charli Jacobsen paced the seventh-grade girls by winning the 100-meter hurdles in 18.5 seconds while also placing second in the 200-meter hurdles in 33.3. Addison Steffes added fourth in the 100 hurdles and fifth in the 200 hurdles.

Rowan Patterson finished second in the eighth-grade 100 meters in 13.5 seconds, while Sandness earned runner-up honors in the eighth-grade 200 meters. Libby Johnson added a sixth-place finish in the 100 meters.

Mya Moody turned in a pair of top-six finishes in the seventh-grade sprints, placing fourth in the 100 meters and sixth in the 200 meters.

Groton also received solid field-event performances from Andi Gauer, who placed fifth in the eighth-grade discus at 60 feet, 3 inches, and Lillian Davis, who finished seventh in the seventh-grade discus.



The JH Girls also had a Record-Breaking Day at the Junior High NEC Meet today in Groton! The 8th Grade 4 x 100m Relay Team of Libby Johnson, Andi Iverson, Rowan Patterson, and Kinley Sandness ran a time of 56.58, to claim the 8th grade school record! The record was previously held by Katie Koehler, Audrey Wanner, Heather Lone, and McKenzie Menzia in 2013, with a time of 57.64! (Courtesy Photo)

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Boy's Division

Boys 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Sisseton 142, 2. Webster Area 106, 3. Milbank 105, 4. Clark/Willow Lake 86, 5. Roncalli 53, 6. Hamlin 45, 7. Deuel 33, 8. Groton Area 31.

Boys 8th Grade Team Scores: 1. Milbank 158.67, 2. Groton Area 111, 3. Roncalli 82, 4. Redfield 60.5, 5. Sisseton 51, 6. Webster Area 46, 7. Clark/Willow Lake 32.33, 8. Tiospa Zina 32, 9. Deuel 31.5, 10. Britton-Hecla 17, 11. Hamlin 2.

100 Meters 7th: 1. Ivan Schwan, 12.5; 8. Quinton Flores, J 13.6.

100 Meters 8th: 1. Ryder Schwan, 11.5; 6. Trayce Schelle, 12.7; 19. Wyatt Morehouse, 14.7.

200 Meters 7th: 1. Ivan Schwan, 25.8; 7. Quinton Flores, 28.6.

200 Meters 8th: 1. Ryder Schwan, 23.9; 17. Wyatt Morehouse, 31.2; 20. Gavin Hanten, 32.8.

400 Meters 8th: 1. Kyson Kucker, 55.8; 3. Keegan Kucker, 59.9; 5. Liam Lord, 1:02.1.

800 Meters 7th: 2. Quinton Flores, 2:35.3.

800 Meters 8th: 1. Kyson Kucker, 2:12.1.

4x100 Relay 8th: 1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Trey Tietz, Ryder Schwan), 49.9.

4x200 Relay 8th: 1. Groton: (Trey Tietz, Trayce Schelle, Ivan Schwan, Ryder Schwan), 1:42.2.

4x400 Relay 8th: 1. Groton: (Trey Tietz, Liam Lord, Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, 3:57.7.

SMR 800m - [100-100-200-400] 8th: 1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Liam Johnson, Trey Tietz). 1:54.5.

Shot Put - 8lb 8th: 4. Liam Johnson, 32' 5"; 13. Bentley Harms, 26' 5"; 7. Gavin Hanten, 23' 2".

Discus - 1kg 8th: 6. Liam Johnson, 91' 5"; 12. Bentley Harms, 77' 10"; 19. Gavin Hanten, 63' 5".

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

Girl's Division

Girl's 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Milbank 90, 2. Webster Area 82.5, 3. Sisseton 78.5, 4. Roncalli 77, 5. Redfield 75, 6. Hamlin 59, 7. Groton Area 55, 8. Clark/Willow Lake 26, 9. Britton-Hecla 21, 10. Deuel 6.

Girl's 8th Grade Team Scores: 1. Milbank 176, 2. Sisseton 154, 3. Clark/Willow Lake 64, 4. Groton Area 54, 5. Webster Area 53, 6. Redfield 27, 7. Hamlin 26, 8. Roncalli 20, 9. Deuel 13, 10. Tiospa Zina 11, 11. Britton-Hecla 1.

100 Meters 7th: 4. Mya Moody, 14.4; 8. Zoe Olson, J 14.7; 21. Gracie Borg, 16.1.

100 Meters 8th: 2. Rowan Patterson, 13.5; 6. Libby Johnson, J 13.9.

200 Meters 7th: 6. Mya Moody, 30.6; 8. Zoe Olson, 31.3.

200 Meters 8th: 2. Kinley Sandness, J 28.2.

400 Meters 8th: 6. Andi Iverson, 1:14.2.

100m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th: 1. Charli Jacobsen, 18.5; 4. Addison Steffes, 19.8; 12. Hallie Perkins, 23.1.

200m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th: 2. Charli Jacobsen, 33.3; 5. Addison Steffes, 36.0.

4x100 Relay 7th: 3. Groton: (Charli Jacobsen, Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Gracie Borg), 1:01.8.

4x100 Relay 8th: 1. Groton: (Rowan Patterson, Andi Iverson, Libby Johnson, Kinley Sandness), 57.7.

4x200 Relay 7th: 1. Groton: (Charli Jacobsen, Zoe Olson, Addison Steffes, Gracie Borg), 2:06.5.

4x200 Relay 8th: 2. Groton: (Andi Iverson, Libby Johnson, Kinley Sandnes, Rowan Patterson), 2:00.4.

SMR 800m - [100-100-200-400] 8th: 1. Groton: (Rowan Patterson, Libby Johnson, Andi Iverson, Kinley Sandness), 2:09.9.

Shot Put - 6lb 7th: 13. Lillian Davis, 20' 8"; 14. Hadley Heilman, 20' 5".

Shot Put - 6lb 8th: 13. Andi Gauer, 20' 7".

Discus - 1kg 7th: 7. Lillian Davis, 49' 7"; 14. Hadley Heilman, 40' 8".

Discus - 1kg 8th: 5. Andi Gauer, 60' 3".

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Tigers Earn Varsity Win, JV Battles To Scoreless Tie Against W.I.N.

Groton Tigers picked up a varsity victory and a hard-fought junior varsity tie Monday night against W.I.N. Baseball in Groton.

The Groton varsity squad earned a 6-2 victory behind a strong pitching performance from Gavin Englund and an early spark from Karsten Fliehs.

The Tigers opened the scoring in the second inning when Fliehs blasted a solo home run to left field. Groton continued to build its lead throughout the contest while Englund kept W.I.N. in check on the mound.

Englund earned the win after allowing two runs on five hits over 6 2/3 innings. The right-hander struck out seven and walked three before TC Schuster came on in relief to finish the game.

Braeden Fliehs and Schuster each collected two hits for the Tigers offensively. Karsten Fliehs, Braeden Fliehs and Nick Groebelinghoff each drove in a run during the win.

W.I.N. Baseball was led by Quinn Huetl, who recorded two hits in two at-bats, while Brevan Pitz and Braydon Kroll each drove in a run. W.I.N. also turned a pair of double plays defensively.

In the junior varsity matchup, Groton Area and W.I.N. battled to a scoreless tie in a pitcher's duel highlighted by Braden Fliehs' dominant outing on the mound.

Fliehs struck out 11 batters while allowing just one hit over five shutout innings. He also walked three in the impressive performance.

Asher Zimmerman accounted for Groton's lone hit, finishing 1-for-1 at the plate. Zimmerman also stole three bases as the Tigers totaled four stolen bases in the game.

W.I.N.'s lone hit came from its No. 16 hitter during the scoreless contest.

Groton Area returns to action Wednesday against the Outlaws in both varsity and junior varsity play.

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Tigers Continue To Show Growth Against Class A Sioux Valley

Groton Tigers continued to show improvement Monday night despite falling to the Sioux Valley Cossacks in a non-conference fastpitch softball matchup in Groton.

Facing one of the top Class A teams in the state, the Tigers battled throughout the contest and showed flashes of strong defensive play and aggressive at-bats against tough pitching.

Groton coach Amanda Bisbee said the Tigers elevated their level of play against quality competition.

"They're a tough team every day," Bisbee said of Sioux Valley. "Last time I checked, they were ranked fourth in Class A, so they're a good team. But I think our girls brought their level up again. They played good."

Bisbee pointed to one difficult inning as the difference in the game, but was encouraged with how the Tigers responded afterward.

"Everybody's got one bad inning. It's all right," she said. "They're playing aggressive ball. They're making good plays. They're doing things we haven't done. They were on the pitches, and they're getting better at making contact with these faster pitchers."

The Tigers also continued to make strides defensively, something Bisbee said has improved significantly as the season has progressed.

"Our team is still just beginning and learning how to get out of those innings," Bisbee said. "That's the thing — we are getting out of those innings. We're figuring it out. We're not letting our errors kill us the entire game anymore."

One of the highlight defensive plays came from Kinsley, who made a diving catch that Bisbee called an "ESPN moment."

Behind the plate, Jaedyn also drew praise from her coach for her aggressive play at catcher.

"Jaedyn killed it back there tonight as a catcher," Bisbee said. "She was ready to engage that runner at first. Super good and aggressive."

Groton will now turn its attention to a matchup at Milbank, where Bisbee said the Tigers must continue playing at the same intensity level they showed Monday night.

"The big key is forgetting about the last time we played them and overcoming errors and just playing at this level," Bisbee said. "They're bringing themselves up to play these tougher teams at a tougher level, and that's what we've just got to keep doing."



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Group founded by candidate publishes 'voter guide' purporting to be from 'watchdog organization'

Toby Doeden was founding chairman of political action committee behind text messages and webpage that are critical of his opponents in governor race

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

Republican voters in South Dakota recently received text messages directing them to "the official Republican Voter Guide for the upcoming election," with a link to a webpage that purports to be from "a policy watchdog organization" providing information about where each candidate for governor "stands on taxes, spending and South Dakota's future."

In reality, the text messages and the webpage are products of a political action committee founded and partially funded by one of the four candidates for the Republican nomination for governor: Toby Doeden, a businessman from Aberdeen.

The webpage, which provides negative information about Doeden's three opponents and positive information about him, appears to be a product of "South Dakota Tax Watch."

"South Dakota Tax Watch is a policy watchdog organization committed to sharing factual information about candidates' voting history on taxes and spending," the webpage says.

But South Dakota Tax Watch does not show up as a corporation, nonprofit or political action committee in public listings maintained by South Dakota's secretary of state.

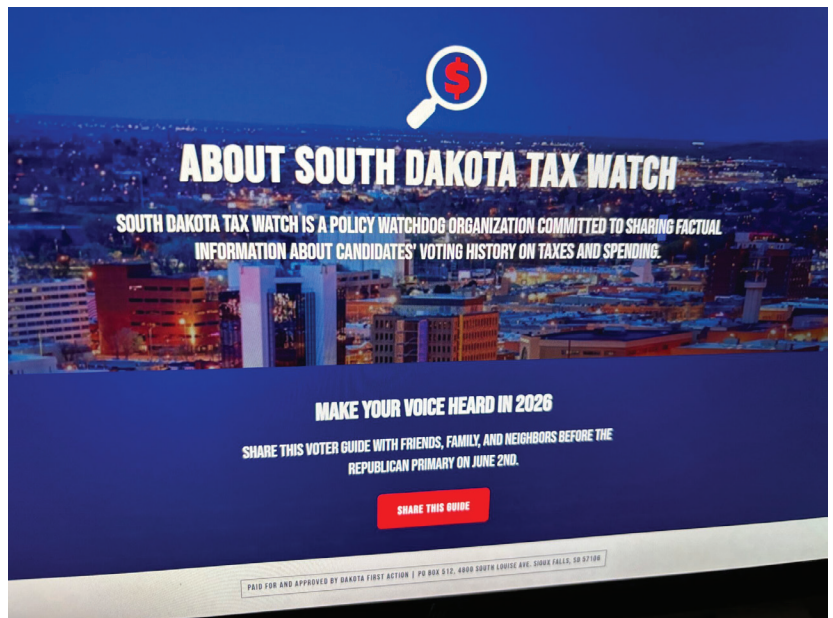
A small disclaimer at the bottom of the South Dakota Tax Watch webpage identifies Dakota First Action as the page's funder and approver. Dakota First Action is a political action committee that was formed in 2024 with Doeden as its chairman. Subsequent campaign finance reports showed the committee owed Doeden more than \$200,000 for loans it received from him.

In July, two months after Doeden had announced his candidacy, the committee filed new paperwork listing Republican former state lawmaker Drew Dennert as chairman.

The Dakota First Action website also features Doeden as its founder.

South Dakota Searchlight asked Doeden for comment. He responded with a written statement.

"I have had ZERO association with DFA, or any other political organization since long before I made the



A webpage purporting to be from "South Dakota Tax Watch," a "policy watchdog organization," is paid for and approved by Dakota First Action, a political action committee that was founded by Republican governor candidate Toby Doeden. (Screenshot by South Dakota Searchlight)

decision to run for office," Doeden wrote. "I am laser-focused on my campaign and my message. When I have something to say, I say it loud and proud from my own campaign. I don't masquerade behind these PACs like my opponents."

Dennert also provided a written statement on behalf of Dakota First Action.

"Obviously, lowering taxes for South Dakota residents is one of our top priorities," he said, in part. "With such an important election taking place, it is important for voters to understand each of the candidates' positions and history as it relates to taxes and spending."

The other candidates for the Republican nomination for governor are Gov. Larry Rhoden, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and state House Speaker Jon Hansen. The primary election is June 2, and early voting is underway.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Governor awards \$500,000 to program converting paraprofessionals to teachers

Money comes from Future Fund for economic development

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota's governor awarded money from an economic development fund he controls to a teacher apprenticeship program, to continue reducing the teacher shortage across the state.

Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden announced a \$500,000 Future Fund award for the South Dakota Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway program on Monday. The funding will add 31 spots to the program's upcoming cohort. The state recently closed applications for the original 40 spots.

The program, started in 2023, allows full-time paraprofessionals — sometimes called teacher's aides — to pursue a teaching degree online through Dakota State University in elementary or special education, or through Northern State University in secondary education, at a steep discount while retaining their position.

Rhoden's announcement expands the upcoming cohort to 71 participants.

"Our teacher apprenticeship program is a proven model that supports our teachers and our communities by developing more certified teachers and keeping educators in our schools," Rhoden said in a news release.

The state gets money for the Future Fund by charging a fee to employers. They pay the fee when they submit payroll taxes that support unemployment benefits.

Rhoden, who is running to keep his job, recently committed \$4 million from the fund to bring a gunsmithing program to Western Dakota Technical College and \$6 million to establish a South Dakota Defense Institute in Rapid City.

The \$500,000 teacher apprenticeship grant



A Sioux Falls School District educator works with students at JFK Elementary School. South Dakota's governor has awarded \$500,000 to a program that helps paraprofessionals, sometimes known as teacher's aides, become teachers. (Courtesy of Sioux Falls School District)

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brought the unobligated balance of the Future Fund to \$23.9 million, said a spokesperson for the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

State law says only that the fund "must be used for purposes related to research and economic development for the state," but that's about to change. Lawmakers approved new restrictions earlier this year, in response to past uses of the fund by Rhoden's predecessor, former Gov. Kristi Noem. Rhoden was elevated from lieutenant governor after Noem resigned in January 2025 to become secretary of the federal Department of Homeland Security.

Noem's controversial uses of the Future Fund included a fireworks show at Mount Rushmore, the construction of a state-owned shooting range near Rapid City that legislators refused to fund, a rodeo in Sioux Falls where Noem carried the American flag into the arena on horseback, and a workforce recruitment advertising campaign that featured Noem as the star.

Rhoden signed the legislative Future Fund reforms into law in March, but they won't take effect until July 1 — after the June 2 primary election pitting Rhoden against three opponents for the Republican nomination.

The reforms add legal definitions for acceptable uses of the fund, mandate more reporting to legislators about awards, specify the information required of applicants, direct the Governor's Office of Economic Development to formulate rules for the fund's use, and require the office to make recommendations to the governor about potential awards.

The announcement of funding for the teacher apprenticeship program comes after nearly 50 people graduated from it last weekend. Since the launch of the program, it has produced 118 graduates.

State Secretary of Education Joseph Graves said he's visited current students and graduates to "see the impact they are making in their classrooms."

"I am incredibly grateful for Governor Rhoden's commitment to strengthening the future of education and empower the next generation of teachers," Graves said in a news release.

Statewide, 144 teaching positions were unfilled as of July last year, weeks before the school year started, according to the Associated School Boards of South Dakota. That's the lowest number in recent years: There were 202 unfilled positions in July 2024, 256 in 2023, 225 in 2022 and 174 in 2021.

The Department of Education started the apprenticeship program, but it is currently funded through the state Department of Labor and Regulation with a combination of state and federal grants to reimburse universities for the discounted portion of tuition and other programming.

School districts pay \$1,000 a year per apprentice. Apprentices are responsible for up to \$1,000 a year in tuition, books and state assessments.

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

Slain infant's family seeks end to statute of limitations on second-degree murder

Law poses a barrier to cold-case prosecution, and one victim's family hopes to change it

BY: AMELIA SCHAFER, ICT

RAPID CITY — It took 30 years for a second-degree murder conviction in the death of 23-month-old Kamisha Nyvold, Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota. What her family didn't know is that 25 years prior, they'd lost their chance to seek the justice they wanted.

For all deaths on federal land, which includes tribal lands and national park lands, there's a five-year statute of limitations for second-degree murder or manslaughter charges. Second-degree murder charges refer to "heat of the moment" killings, whereas first-degree murder charges are given for planned killings and are not subject to a statute of limitations.

A congressional bill in Nyvold's name, called "Kamisha's Law," seeks to eliminate the statute of limitations on second-degree murder — an act that could help bring justice to families across Indian Country.

Nyvold's family had no idea that a statute of limitations existed for second-degree murder on federal lands until it became a problem they had to work around, her mother Christine Irwin said. This experience has led her mother and father Roger Irwin to become advocates for the removal of the statute of limitations, aiming to help victims across Indian Country.

American Indian and Alaska Native people face rates of violence higher than the national average, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cold cases are also common across Indian Country, with hundreds of deaths spanning decades still waiting for answers.

"So what happens when we start to figure it out," said Daniel Orr, a retired FBI agent who investigated Nyvold's death. "We shouldn't lose truth and evidence and the opportunity to prosecute or hold somebody accountable."

Orr served 26 years as an agent at the Aberdeen field office. Before his retirement, a crucial tip came regarding the 1992 murder of Nyvold, who death investigators for years had tried to pin on her mother, to no avail. An inmate at the local tribal jail came forward with information regarding Jay Adams Jr., and it eventually would lead to his conviction.

Adams was working as a dispatcher for the Sisseton Wahpeton Tribal Police Department when Nyvold was killed, a factor Orr said played a major role in investigators' neglect of his potential involvement in the case. Adams was Irwin's boyfriend at the time, and the two were living together when Nyvold was killed. He had previously been physically violent with the toddler.

Orr said during the investigation process he found out that Adams had been interviewed right at his desk at the police station by an officer who sat beside him.

Due to the extreme length of time between Nyvold's death and the new investigation in 2022, investigators had to jump through hoops to bring forth charges.

With so much time having passed, federal investigators had no choice but to charge Adams with first-degree murder for the toddler's death on the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota in 1992, Orr said.

That was a risk, Orr said.

"He could have taken the stand and said, 'Yeah, I did it, but it was an impulsive reaction,'" Orr said. "Then you've taken away the intent, and we might've lost it all."



Christine Irwin, the mother of homicide victim Kamisha Nyvold, speaks at the 2026 MMIP Conference in Rapid City, South Dakota.

(Photo by Amelia Schafer/ICT)

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Ultimately, Adams waived the statute of limitations and pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in exchange for agreeing to describe to Nyvold's mother Christine Irwin exactly what happened and accepting only 10 years in federal prison. If he had been convicted of first-degree murder, Adams would've been subject to life in prison.

"Any crime that involves the killing of a person should never have a statute of limitations associated with it," Orr said.

It's common in Indian Country for cases to stall. In South Dakota alone there are dozens of instances of cold cases on tribal land, particularly involving hit-and-run deaths.

Instances of pedestrian hit-and-run deaths are higher within Indian Country than anywhere else in the United States, many of which have gone unsolved for decades. Hit-and-run deaths, when charged and convicted, are typically prosecuted as second-degree murder or manslaughter. With the current statute of limitations in place, it's highly unlikely for any case older than five years to result in a conviction, Orr said.

South Dakota Sen. Mike Rounds, Republican, introduced Kamisha's Law in July 2025 with an identical version re-introduced in the House by South Dakota Congressman Dusty Johnson, Republican, on Feb. 4, 2026.

"Prosecution for murder should not have an expiration date," said Rounds in a Sept. 30, 2025, press release.

He cited the removal of the statutes of limitations on both first-degree murder and sexual abuse in the early 2000s as evidence that this should be the natural next step in ensuring violent perpetrators are held accountable.

Kamisha's Law would eliminate the statute of limitations on second-degree murder and allow for the prosecution of cases that otherwise would have stalled, but more support is needed from federal legislators and tribes alike to help get the bill passed, said Kamisha's father Roger Irwin.

The family has attempted to reach out to all 575 federally recognized tribes. However, many publicly listed emails for tribal council members are inactive or outdated.

So far, three tribes have signed on in support of Kamisha's Law – the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Yankton Sioux Tribe and Catawba Nation. However, following the family's presentation at the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People's conference in Rapid City on May 1, representatives in attendance from the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Rosebud Sioux Tribe pledged their support.

Additionally, legislators outside of South Dakota have expressed concern that they'd be more willing to support it if the request came from inside of their districts, Roger Irwin said. The hope is for concerned citizens to help reach out to their respective lawmakers and push for support.

And Kamisha's Law wouldn't only help Indian Country, Roger Irwin said. It would apply to investigations on all federal lands, which include national parks.

The deadline for Kamisha's Law to be passed in this current legislative season is January 2027, Roger Irwin said, and it's approaching quicker than anyone realizes.

"We're not going to give up on this," he said. "It's something we're going to do for the rest of our lives to help communities."

Amelia Schafer is the Indigenous Affairs reporter for ICT and is based in Rapid City. She is of Wampanoag and Montauk-Brothertown Indian Nation descent.

Trump nominates ousted FEMA chief to return

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday nominated Cameron Hamilton to run the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a former acting chief who was fired in 2025 shortly after he told a congressional panel FEMA should continue to exist.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee will likely schedule a hearing in the coming weeks for Hamilton to testify about his goals for the agency as part of the confirmation process.

The panel will then schedule a vote on whether to send his nomination to the floor, where Hamilton will need to secure approval from a majority of senators before he would become FEMA administrator.

Taking on that role will be no easy task, especially since Trump has spoken repeatedly during his second administration about reducing the size and scope of the agency.

"We want to wean off of FEMA and we want to bring it down to the state level," Trump said in June. "We're moving it back to the states so the governors can handle it. That's why they're governors. Now, if they can't handle it, they shouldn't be governor."

The FEMA review council that Trump created to review the agency submitted its report last week recommending states shoulder more of the cost and responsibility of disaster relief.



The Federal Emergency Management Agency, on Feb. 20, 2026. (Photo by Shauneen Miranda/States Newsroom)

Not 'in the best interest' to kill FEMA

The previous disconnect between Trump and Hamilton about whether FEMA should continue led to Hamilton being removed from his role leading the agency last year.

Hamilton testified before a House panel in May 2025 that he personally did "not believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

"Having said that, I'm not in a position to make decisions and impact outcomes on whether or not a determination, such as consequential as that, should be made," he said at the time. "That is a conversation that should be had between the president of the United States and this governing body on identifying the exact ways and methodologies, in which, what is prudent for federal investment, and what is not."

One day later he was ousted as the senior official performing the duties of the administrator at FEMA.

David Richardson has been the senior official performing the duties of FEMA administrator ever since. He was previously the assistant secretary of Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office at the Department of Homeland Security.

Podcast tell-all

Hamilton detailed his time leading FEMA on an episode of the "Disaster Tough" podcast that aired in September, saying he had developed a plan to address that the agency had "become too bureaucratic."

"I was very clear and poignant that the cause of most of the problems in FEMA is because we keep putting too much crap in FEMA's rucksack that never should have been there," he said.

Hamilton then spoke about the Shelter and Services Program, which provides grant funding to organizations that help to house, feed and assist migrants released by the Department of Homeland Security.

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He argued that isn't an "emergency management requirement" and that "FEMA has become a functional multi-tool."

Housing was a "prime example" of where another federal department, like Housing and Urban Development, could take over some of the tasks that FEMA currently handles, he said.

"I said, we need to aggressively talk to HUD about them having a larger stakehold in that particular missions field because they are more uniquely suited," he said.

But Hamilton insisted he was not supportive of plans to completely eliminate the agency.

"I was not hired to abolish FEMA. That was never a part of the conversation and that's never something that I would have agreed with," he said on the podcast. "And I was very clear, I wanted some reform. I wanted to cut wasteful spending. I wanted to downsize the agency. There's no denying that. And I think most of those things could be done wisely and properly."

Any offloading of responsibilities from the federal government to states, he said, would include "a gradual phasing out."

"We needed to give the states some time to see what that entails and to respond accordingly," he said. "Not just, 'Hey, the water is now shut off. You're on your own.' That's not wise. That's not being a good partner."

'I wanted to choke some people'

Hamilton also discussed what happened before and after he testified in front of a House subcommittee a year ago, including that he was polygraphed in March.

"One of the more difficult things for me to deal with was when my character was being attacked, and when I was being accused of being a liar and a leaker, and I was polygraphed for it," he said. "DHS requested that I be polygraphed. And they said in their statement, you know, my character, judgment, my stability, my ethics were all in question."

Asked by the podcast host if he wanted to put on his "Navy SEAL hat" when that was happening, Hamilton responded, "I wanted to choke some people, that's for sure."

Hamilton said he knew that he was about to be fired and that on the day he testified before Congress, officials "notified my security that my access was eliminated. So before the testimony, I knew it was coming, and I knew it was coming weeks in advance."

Later in the episode, Hamilton said he knew he would be asked during the hearing about Trump's comments regarding FEMA and spoke with former FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor to work through how best to answer the question.

The two then "came to the agreement" that Hamilton would say, "it's not in the best interest of the American people."

"I cannot get behind this position that abolishing FEMA is the answer," he said. "There are so many things that we can do before we go that extreme and put the American people at what I believe to be extreme risk unnecessarily."

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Suspected White House press dinner shooter pleads not guilty to 4 federal charges

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY



Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche speaks as FBI Director Kash Patel and acting Assistant FBI Director for the Criminal Investigative Division Darren Cox listen at a press conference at the Department of Justice on April 27, 2026, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Tasos Katopodis/Getty Images)

WASHINGTON — The man who allegedly attacked the White House Correspondents' Dinner last month pleaded not guilty Monday in federal court to four criminal charges, including attempting to assassinate the president of the United States.

Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of California, appeared before U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden in Washington, D.C., to be arraigned on charges that he tried to take the president's life, which carries a possible life sentence, and that he assaulted a U.S. officer, transported a firearm and ammunition across state lines with intent to commit a felony and discharged a deadly weapon during a violent crime.

U.S. Department of Justice officials obtained the indictment on May 5.

Allen's public defenders delivered the plea to McFadden as they stood on either side of Allen, who wore an

orange jumpsuit and shackles and was accompanied by two law enforcement officers.

The arraignment comes just over two weeks after Allen allegedly rushed a U.S. Secret Service security checkpoint and fired a weapon one level above the ballroom where President Donald Trump, numerous Cabinet officials and thousands of other administration officials, journalists and lawmakers were attending the annual event.

Trump, first lady Melania Trump and Cabinet officials safely evacuated from the April 25 dinner.

A Secret Service agent, referred to in court documents as V.G., was hit in his protective vest by a bullet, but court documents do not specify who fired the shot. The agent was uninjured.

According to an affidavit signed April 27 by an FBI agent, Officer V.G. fired five rounds from his service weapon in Allen's direction, but did not hit him.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro, who attended the dinner, and government prosecutors argued Allen traveled across the country by train "armed to the teeth" and was willing to "commit a mass shooting inside a room full of the highest ranking officials in the U.S. government," according to a memo filed prior to the superseding indictment.

Prosecutors' conflict of interest?

Allen's federal public defenders argued Pirro and acting Attorney General Todd Blanche should recuse themselves from the case to avoid a conflict of interest, as both have "made statements indicating that they were witnesses to events," according to motion filed Thursday.

"These are individuals alleging they are victims," defense attorney Eugene Ohm said in court Monday, adding it would be "wholly inappropriate for a victim ... to be the individuals who are prosecuting."

Additionally, Ohm said Blanche "has a very close relationship" with the alleged target of the crime —

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Trump. Blanche was Trump's personal defense lawyer prior to the president appointing him to the Department of Justice.

Discovery questions

McFadden said the situation would be "very surprising" if either Blanche or Pirro were called to testify at trial, but Ohm said there could be a risk if prosecutors filed additional charges after discovery, the pretrial investigative stage of a prosecution.

Ohm said the defense has not yet been provided with any discovery.

McFadden gave government prosecutors two weeks to respond to the defense's request that Pirro and Blanche recuse themselves.

"It would be helpful to have some definitive view" on whether they "see themselves as victims," McFadden told DOJ prosecutor Charles Jones.

McFadden scheduled the next hearing for June 29, by which time he told prosecutors he "will be hoping we've made substantial progress on discovery."

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

Trump so far failing in quest for power over elections as midterms approach

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters before boarding Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in December 2025. (Photo by Tom Brenner/Getty Images)

As President Donald Trump tries to assert power over U.S. elections, he has raged on social media, cajoled Republican lawmakers and unleashed the Department of Justice on his political enemies.

What has he accomplished with all that effort? Not a lot.

Six months before the November midterm elections, the Trump administration's quest to exercise authority over the contests and impose sweeping restrictions on voters has proved largely unsuccessful. The aggressive campaign — separate from Trump's more effective foray into redistricting fights — has been stymied by the courts, rebuffed by many state election officials and opposed by key Republican senators.

"I think there's many out there who are worried about the constant drumbeat of what the administration is trying to do and what they might do in the future. I hear this from voters, I hear this from election officials," said David Becker, executive director of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research.

"And what I see is that there is a vast chasm between wanting to do something and trying to do something and actually successfully doing it."

Months yet to go

Much could change between now and November, of course.

Facing likely Republican losses in the midterms, election experts warn that Trump could lash out with increasingly brazen attempts to control elections. Or that the Justice Department will conduct more raids

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targeting election officials, like the FBI seizure of ballots from the 2020 presidential election from Fulton County, Georgia.

Democrats remain braced for federal election interference, especially the prospect of Trump deploying immigration enforcement agents or the military at polling locations — an action prohibited under federal law that some administration aides have nevertheless refused to flatly rule out.

But Trump's record of achievement up to this point is poor.

The SAVE America Act, which would require voters to prove their citizenship, is stalled in the U.S. Senate despite Trump's repeated demands for its passage. Federal courts blocked an executive order Trump signed last year that sought to impose a proof-of-citizenship rule unilaterally.

The Justice Department hasn't secured a single court victory in the 30 lawsuits it's filed to force states and the District of Columbia to turn over sensitive personal data on voters. A bipartisan group of state secretaries of state is fighting the Trump administration in court — only 13 Republican states have provided the information.

And an executive order signed in March that would limit voting by mail faces five federal lawsuits, with an initial courtroom showdown set for Thursday in Washington, D.C. Federal agencies have yet to finalize plans to implement the directive, which election law experts call illegal and unconstitutional.

"America's Elections are Rigged, Stolen, and a Laughingstock all over the World. We are either going to fix them, or we won't have a Country any longer," Trump posted on Truth Social in late April.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson told States Newsroom that Trump is committed "to ensuring that Americans have full confidence in the administration of elections, and that includes totally accurate and up-to-date voter rolls free of errors and unlawfully registered non-citizen voters."

Jackson named several federal laws that she said provide the Justice Department oversight over states' election administration. She also noted Trump's support for the SAVE America Act.

"Anyone breaking the law will be held accountable," Jackson said in an email.

System under strain

Trump has placed the nation's electoral system under immense stress before.

After the 2020 election, the president and his allies worked to overturn the results, with Trump leaning on then-Vice President Mike Pence to reject Electoral College votes. The effort failed but it led to a mob storming the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and disrupting Congress' certification of Joe Biden's victory.

Today, the system is holding but under strain. An analysis released Thursday by Issue One, a pro-democracy group, likened American elections to a resilient patient with a strong immune system. Yet the Trump administration, rather than boosting the body's immunity, acts like a virus, it said.

"America's election system's immune system is not breaking, but it is actively fighting against the virus of democratic backsliding," the analysis reads.

The group identified three safeguards it says are in critical condition: Congress, internal checks within the executive branch and the information ecosystem.

Election officials have watched with particular concern as the Justice Department probes the 2020 election. Trump has long falsely asserted that the election was stolen and in January 2021 pressured the Georgia secretary of state to find him enough votes to overturn his loss in that state.

After the FBI obtained a warrant to seize 2020 election ballots from Fulton County, which encompasses Atlanta, in January 2026, the DOJ last month sent a subpoena for information on the county's election workers. The subpoena demands the names, positions, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of election workers and poll volunteers who worked the 2020 general election.

Fulton County is fighting the subpoena in court. On Wednesday, a federal judge ruled that the FBI doesn't have to give the ballots back to the county, though he noted the seizure "was certainly not perfect."

The Justice Department has also obtained a grand jury subpoena for election records in Arizona and demanded 2024 ballots from Wayne County, Michigan, which includes Detroit. And the FBI recently interviewed a Wisconsin election official about the 2020 election, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

Local leaders have promised that they won't bend to pressure from the Trump administration.

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"This whole thing is designed to harass, intimidate and chill participation in our election process," Fulton County Board of Commissioners Chair Robb Pitts, a Democrat, said in a video statement. "It's not going to work, it's not going to happen."

Blue state action

Some states are pursuing additional safeguards against federal election interference.

For example, New Mexico lawmakers passed a bill that makes intentionally obstructing polling places a felony and prohibits the military or any armed federal personnel from polling locations.

The legislative push, concentrated in Democratic states, comes as Trump administration officials have sidestepped direct questions about whether troops or federal agents could be deployed to the polls.

"It's yet another gotcha hypothetical," Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at a recent U.S. Senate hearing.

The Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation May 6 that imposes a 250-foot buffer zone around election sites where warrantless arrests and searches, use of force and ID checks by state or federal officers, including immigration agents, are banned. The measure also bans masked or concealed identities near polling places, among other provisions.

Connecticut state Rep. Matt Blumenthal, a Democrat who chairs the state House Government Administration & Elections Committee, said that if nothing happens during this fall's elections, "I'll say, 'Good, it worked.'"

The goal of the bill isn't to create confrontations between Connecticut law enforcement and federal forces, but to deter intimidation in the first place, he said.

"We have a responsibility to protect all of our residents, but especially our voters, related to our elections — to prevent these sorts of tools of threat and intimidation and terror from being used to shape our political life," Blumenthal said in an interview.

Connecticut state Sen. Rob Sampson, a Republican, said that he wouldn't support abuse from the federal government. But Democrats, he said, were spinning a false narrative of voter intimidation for political purposes and attempting to distract from weaknesses in election security.

"In the last few years, I don't always trust the results," Sampson said on the Senate floor. "Now, some people will go out there and say, 'Oh, you're an election denier.' I'm not saying that there's tens of thousands of faulty or erroneous or fraudulent votes. I'm just saying that there's definitely some."

GOP elections bill stalled

Trump and Republicans in Congress say major action is needed to boost election confidence.

At Trump's urging, the U.S. House passed the SAVE America Act in February. In addition to requiring voters to show documents such as a passport or birth certificate that prove citizenship, the legislation also imposes ID requirements at the polls and would require states to bolster efforts to clean voter registration lists.

Polling suggests Americans support at least some of the bill's provisions. A Politico poll conducted in April found 52% of Americans support requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote, while 18% oppose.

Democrats, election administration experts and some Republicans say the proposal would lead to chaos. Its provisions would take effect immediately, upending voting requirements potentially months or weeks before elections. Married women and others who have last names that don't match their birth certificates could face additional obstacles registering to vote.

The SAVE America Act hasn't advanced in the U.S. Senate. Sen. John Kennedy, a Louisiana Republican and major proponent of the bill, attempted to add the measure onto a budget bill in April, but the Senate rejected it, 48-50.

"This doesn't mean Trump and his allies in Congress will stop," Héctor Sánchez Barba, president and CEO of Mi Familia Vota, a Latino voting rights group, said in a statement.

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The Senate has since moved off the SAVE America Act and would need to hold a procedural vote to return to it. Whether that happens is in doubt, but Kennedy indicated to Punchbowl News that he intends to force another amendment vote later this month. His office didn't respond to an email from States Newsroom seeking confirmation.

Postal Service

Without the SAVE America Act, Trump's options to legally restrict voting are limited.

Trump signed an executive order in March attempting to limit the U.S. Postal Service's delivery of ballots through the mail. The order also directs the Department of Homeland Security to create "state citizenship lists" that include the names of voting-age citizens in each state — effectively creating a national voter list.

But the order has come under legal attack from Democratic groups, a coalition of Democratic states and multiple voting rights organizations. Its opponents are hopeful that federal judges will soon block the directive like they did a March 2025 order that included a proof-of-citizenship requirement.

"I don't have confidence that the Trump administration or Donald Trump will refrain from trying to interfere with our elections," Blumenthal said. "But I have great confidence that the American people will stand up against it."

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

Thune promotes Iowa Republican's US Senate campaign, touts GOP's tax cuts

South Dakota senator credits Hinson's work on 2025 tax policy changes

BY: ROBIN OPSAHL

U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune joined Rep. Ashley Hinson for a roundtable in Des Moines Friday touting how tax law changes passed by the GOP-controlled Congress in 2025 are helping Iowa families, workers and business owners.

The discussion comes as campaign events are ramping up leading into the 2026 election season. Hinson is running for U.S. Senate, aiming to replace U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, who is not seeking a third term.

Thune said Senate Republicans "are very much looking forward to having Rep. Hinson join us in the United States Senate as Sen. Hinson," and continuing the work she has done representing Iowa in the House since 2021.

The event Friday at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny centered on the work Hinson has done in the U.S. House supporting the "Working Families Tax Cuts" — part of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act President Donald Trump signed into law in July 2025.



Senate Majority Leader John Thune joined U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson, who is running for the Senate in 2026, for a roundtable discussion on the impacts of the 2025 tax law supported by the GOP-controlled Congress at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny May 8, 2026.

(Photo by Robin Opsahl/Iowa Capital Dispatch)

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Thune called the tax and spending bill, which covered a variety of subjects from restrictions on Medicaid spending to increasing qualified deductions for tips and overtime, "the most consequential piece of legislation that we passed, by far," during his time in Congress.

Hinson said getting this measure signed into law has produced "tangible" savings for Iowans who had been struggling with rising costs, through provisions like reducing taxes on tips, overtime and Social Security benefits.

"We just went through the tax return season, and Iowans saw more money in their pockets — the actual numbers, tax refunds increased by 11% and with an average return of about \$3,500," Hinson said. "You look at what that means for an Iowa family, that's groceries, that's utility money, that's maybe a vacation with your family, extra money for sports or kids' lunch accounts, in my case, because my kids are always texting me asking me for more lunch money."

The Friday roundtable hosted a group of five Iowans who spoke on how they had utilized portions of the 2025 law to make investments for their own family or business. Speakers included a father who plans to start a "Trump Account" — a tax-deferred investment account for minors under age 18 — for his 5-month-old daughter, and a business owner who said the cost savings from tax cuts allowed his business to hire new interns.

Two of the speakers at the roundtable spoke in support of changes made through the 2025 tax and spending law, but said they wanted to see Congress take more action to lower the cost of healthcare.

Ginny Mitchell said she lost her job at Iowa State University in June 2025, and bought a new car which allowed her to work as an Uber driver. She said she received a larger tax return than expected when she filed this year, and that the deduction of up to \$25,000 on tips through the 2025 law was "substantial" for her family. She said the change has been positive as working with Uber has allowed her to homeschool her youngest child.

However, Mitchell said she wanted to see Congress take action to make healthcare affordable. Mitchell said she lost her health insurance after losing her job at ISU.

"I can't go get a mammogram, I can't do these things anymore. I can't afford it," Mitchell said. "At first, I did. I did have health insurance through the (ACA) Marketplace. But it's not worth it — \$6,000 deductible with a (\$50) copay for every visit, and paying \$300 a month just for myself. You know, that's unaffordable."

Mitchell did not say when she left her ACA Marketplace coverage. ACA coverage has declined nationwide in 2026 as premium costs rose following the expiration of premium subsidies.

Thune said his approach would be to create association health plans that would allow small businesses and self-employed workers to form groups that allow them to purchase insurance, but said Democrats have blocked this proposal from moving forward. The Senate majority leader also said he was interested in potentially changing other aspects of the ACA, such as provisions of the bill restricting insurance companies' ability to refuse coverage or charge higher premiums based on some aspects of people's health, like preexisting conditions.

"Obamacare requires individual plans, individual marketplaces, to cover all these different things, right?" Thune said. "And what you ought to have, in my view, and I think this is something that you could do, re-up on it, you know, on a year-to-year basis, but give you the flexibility and the option to buy a plan that works for you. And I think insurers, if they were freed up to be able to write those types of plans ... for example, I mean, I don't need maternity coverage, right? But I might need eyes, or something, you know, ears, things that people my age have issues with. And being able to tailor or customize or individualize a health care policy that fits you is something we ought to be headed toward."

Though Hinson is considered the frontrunner to become the GOP nominee for the U.S. Senate seat — she leads the field in campaign fundraising and has gained endorsements from Ernst, President Donald Trump and many other Republicans in Washington, D.C. and Iowa — she first must face Republican Jim Carlin in the June 2 primary. On the Democratic side, Iowa Sen. Zach Wahls, D-Coralville, and Rep. Josh Turek, D-Council Bluffs, are facing off in the primary.

Democrats are poised to potentially pick up seats in Iowa and elsewhere in the country in the 2026 midterms, as some voters have expressed disapproval of the Trump administration and Republicans' ap-

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proach to immigration enforcement, as well as changes to healthcare funding through Medicaid work requirements included in the 2025 tax and spending law as well as the expiration of Affordable Care Act premium tax subsidies.

Though political forecasters predict Iowa's U.S. Senate seat is "likely" to remain Republican, the state's elections are expected to be more competitive than in earlier years, especially looking at Iowa's 1st and 3rd congressional Districts, as well as the governor's seat. As Iowa's races become more competitive, GOP leaders are coming to support Iowa Republicans at events showcasing how Iowans have benefitted from recent GOP policies. Earlier this week, Vice President JD Vance came to Des Moines to support U.S. Rep. Zach Nunn's reelection campaign in the 3rd District, where he also spoke about how GOP economic policies have helped Iowa businesses and workers.

This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, 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.

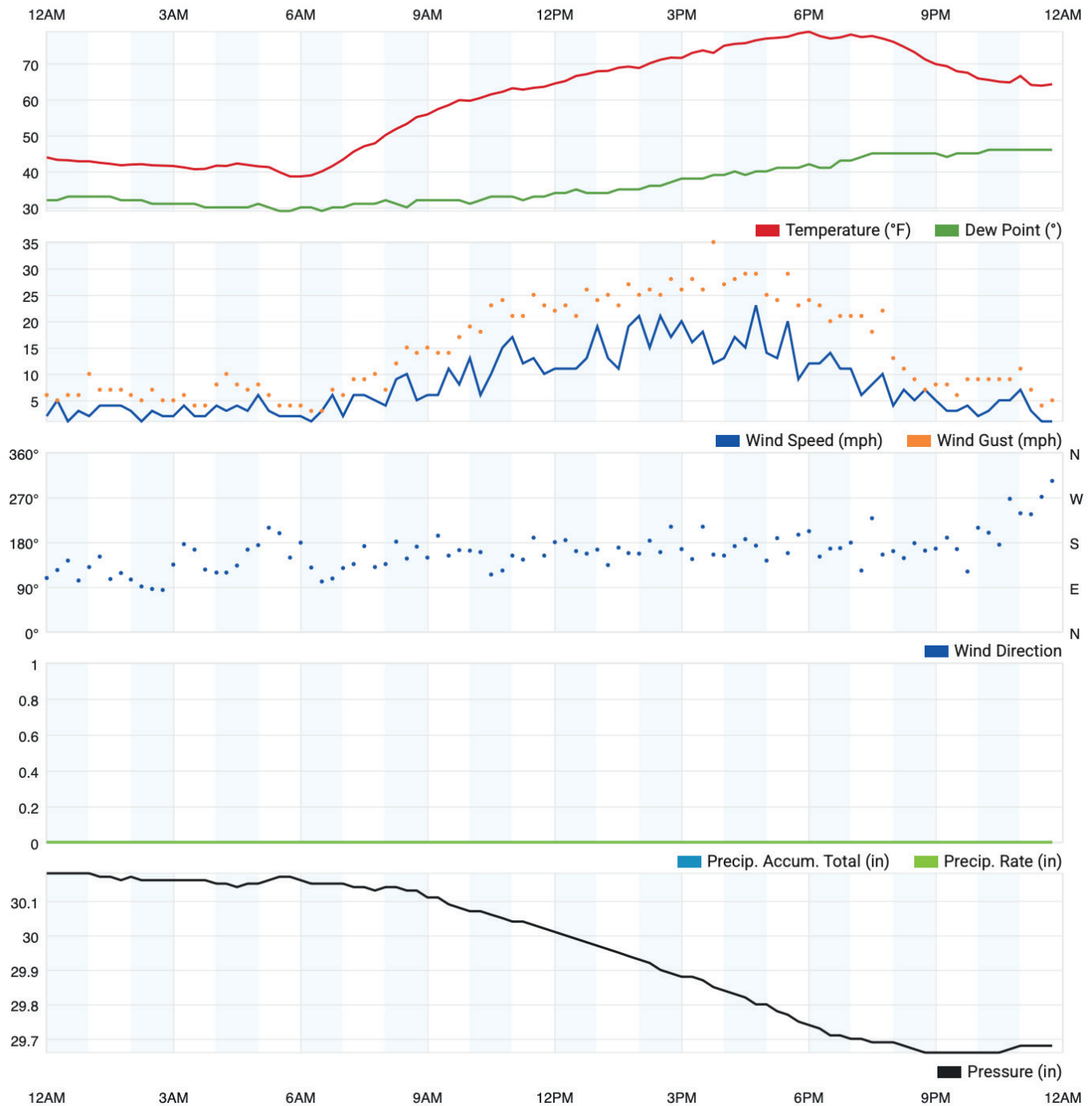
Robin Opsahl is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering the state Legislature and politics. Robin has experience covering government, elections and more at media organizations including Roll Call, the Sacramento Bee and the Wausau Daily Herald, in addition to working on multimedia projects, newsletters and visualizations. They were a political reporter for the Des Moines Register covering the Iowa caucuses leading up to the 2020 presidential election, assisting with the Register's Iowa Poll, and reporting on Iowa's 4th District elections.

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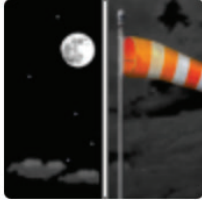

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 11, 2026



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Wind Advisory		Red Flag Warning			
Today		Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
					
High: 73 °F		Low: 40 °F	High: 78 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 82 °F
Breezy. Sunny then Patchy Blowing Dust		Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear then Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Slight Chance Showers and Windy



Red Flag Warning Today

Wind and Humidity combine to create critical fire weather conditions.

May 12, 2026
3:20 AM CDT

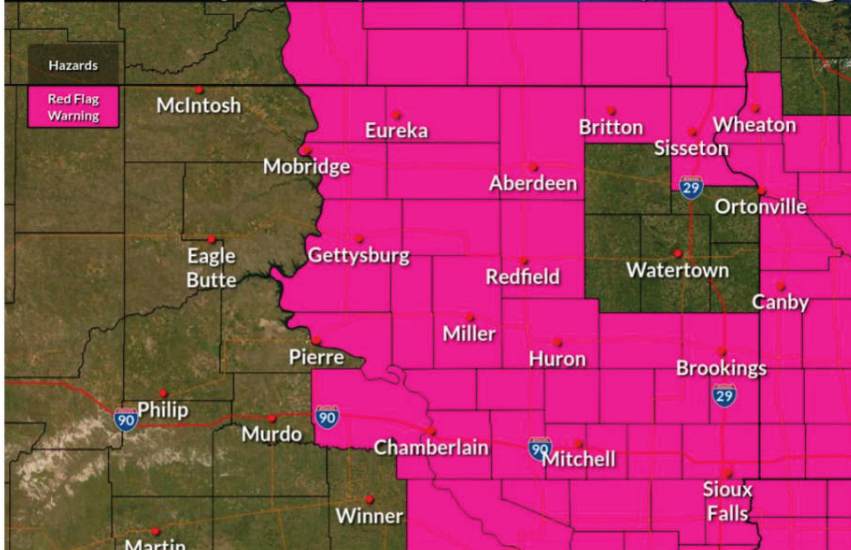
Red Flag Warning Tuesday

In effect from 11 AM CDT through 9 PM CDT Tuesday.

Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD

Issued May 11, 2026 3:56 PM CDT



Key Messages

- A Red Flag Warning in effect this afternoon
 - Warning is in effect from 11 AM CDT through 9 PM CDT.
- Minimum afternoon humidity will be between 20 and 30 percent.
- Northwest winds at 20 to 30 miles per hour, gusting up to 40 to 45 miles per hour under the Red Flag Warning.
- High to Very High Grassland Fire Danger.
- Fires that ignite will spread rapidly and become difficult to control or suppress.



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Dry conditions will combine with northwest winds gusting to 35 to 45 mph to create high to very high grassland fire danger this afternoon. A Red Flag Warning is in effect this afternoon and evening for portions of the region.

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Gusty Winds Persist Today

May 12, 2026
3:23 AM CDT

- Northwest winds gusting 35 to 45 mph.
 - Sustained winds reach 25-30 mph.
 - *Wind Advisory winds expected north of Hwy 12 in northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota.*
- **If a fire were to ignite, these winds would make it difficult to control or suppress!**

	5/12 Tue					
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm
Aberdeen	32	39	40	40	36	17
Britton	33	41	44	41	37	20
Chamberlain	25	31	35	35	29	12
Clark	35	39	43	43	38	20
Eagle Butte	31	33	35	32	26	13
Eureka	36	41	43	40	33	13
Gettysburg	32	36	39	37	30	13
McIntosh	32	37	38	35	28	10
Milbank	33	38	39	39	37	22
Miller	30	37	40	40	33	16
Mobridge	29	32	33	31	28	12
Murdo	28	32	35	33	28	12
Pierre	26	30	32	32	26	8
Redfield	33	40	44	43	37	17
Sisseton	39	43	44	44	38	22
Watertown	35	40	43	41	37	21
Webster	36	40	41	40	36	21
Wheaton	35	39	39	38	36	23



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Northwest winds gusting 35 to 45 mph today will create high to very high grassland fire danger today.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 6:04 PM

Low Temp: 38 °F at 5:55 AM

Wind: 36 mph at 3:39 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 2025

Record Low: 17 in 1946

Average High: 69

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in May.: 1.32

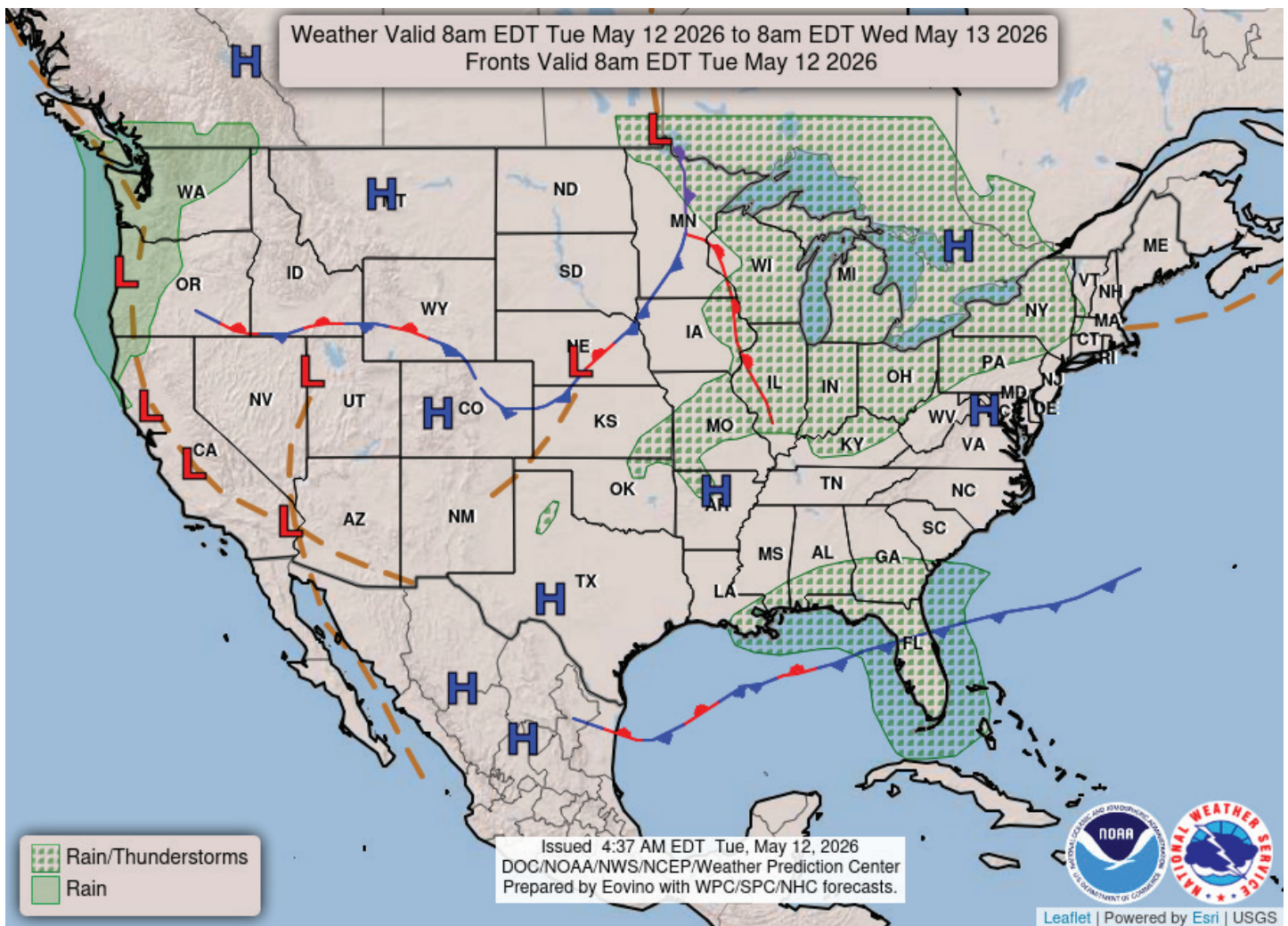
Precip to date in May.: 0.03

Average Precip to date: 5.29

Precip Year to Date: 3.15

Sunset Tonight: 8:52 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:04 am



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Today in Weather History

May 12th, 1984: An F3 tornado wiped out seven farms, crippled fifteen others, killed livestock and scattered several cars and machinery in its path. The tornado first touched down seven miles north and one mile east of Clark and moved southeast through the southwestern sections of Henry until it dissipated at Grover in Codrington County. The path of destruction began on a farm where two barns, a steel grain bin, and a pole barn were demolished, and machinery was damaged. As the tornado moved further southeast, it struck the southwest sections of Henry and split into two tornadoes that moved in two different directions. One went to the northeast, inflicted no damage, and dissipated, while the other went southeast and continued its destruction path to Grover. Small hail, accumulation to fifteen inches deep, was experienced at Henry, and tornado damage included broken windows, numerous homes, and three trailer homes were demolished. Eighty power poles and several miles of power lines were lost along the path, affecting power to over 1,000 people. A small plane, southwest of Garden City, was wrapped around a pole.

1934 — A dust storm darkened skies from Oklahoma to the Atlantic coast. (David Ludlum)

1971 — Duststorms suddenly reduced visibilities to near zero on Interstate Highway 10 near Casa Grande AZ. Chain reaction accidents involving cars and trucks resulted, killing seven persons. (The Weather Channel)

1972 — In Texas, A cloudburst dumped sixteen inches of rain north of New Braunfels sending a thirty foot wall of water down Blueders Creek into the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers washing away people, houses and automobiles. The flood claimed 18 lives and caused more than twenty million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1982 — A late season snowstorm struck the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. The storm produced 46 inches of snow at Coal Creek Canyon, located near Boulder. (David Ludlum)

1987 — A heat wave persisted in central California. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Fresno CA and 102 degrees at Sacramento CA were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the western U.S. Eight cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Pendleton OR with a high of 92 degrees and Phoenix AZ with a reading of 106 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Showers and thunderstorms associated with a low pressure system stalled over New York State drenched Portland ME with 4.50 inches of rain in 24 hours. Rains of 5 to 7 inches soaked the state of Maine over a four day period causing 1.3 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Texas and the Central Gulf Coast States into Missouri and Illinois. Thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes, including one which injured four persons at Doloroso MS. Thunderstorms also produced hail three inches in diameter west of Vicksburg MS, and wind gusts to 83 mph in southern Illinois, north of Vevay Park and at the Coles County Airport. High winds and heavy rain caused 1.6 million dollars crop damage in Calhoun County IL, and in southeastern Louisiana, Saint Joseph was deluged with eight inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotion

We All Have a Beautiful Testimony

When you faithfully share your testimony, God will use it to reach others

Psalms 126:1-6: 1 When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion, We were like those who dream.

2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter And our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

3 The LORD has done great things for us; We are glad.

4 Restore our captivity, O LORD, As the streams in the South.

5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.

6 He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

We love inspiring stories. Biographies of those who make great use of a second chance tend to top bestseller lists. But few people experience something so dramatic. Most of us are wonderfully ordinary. Sadly, some believers think that being a "regular person" makes their testimony unexciting and less valuable. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A personal testimony is a way of expressing what God has done and is doing in our life. No matter how commonplace our words may seem compared to someone else's, the Lord will see to it that they impact the hearers who need them.

Imagine this: A 6-year-old girl accepts Christ. As she grows, she'll be able to tell her friends of God's greatness, explaining that He made the gospel clear to her as a child and continues to reveal something new to her regularly. When she is 80, she'll be able to share about a lifetime of walking with Jesus. Her testimony may not be "exciting," but it doesn't need to be. It will be spiritual gold.

No matter what your story is, God can and will use it. You have no idea how far-reaching your testimony can be. God says that His words will not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). And the story of Jesus' saving grace is always worth telling.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.11.26

42 45 46 48 56 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.08.26

37 47 49 51 58 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$232,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 9 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.11.26

16 19 22 34 46 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,420,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 24 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.09.26

1 2 4 8 18

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$86,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 39 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.11.26

9 13 34 42 59 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 8 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.11.26

24 30 37 56 64 7

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$69,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 8 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

South Dakota tourism leader: High gas prices could hold 'silver lining'

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

Members of the Foley family of Green Bay, Wisconsin, are the quintessential visitors that tourism officials and operators hope will push South Dakota to a successful 2026 tourism season.

The family of four drove 12 hours from home for a weeklong tour of the Black Hills of South Dakota in late April and refused to let high gas prices, inflation or a soft national economy delay or postpone their visit.

The Foleys usually fly to a beach destination each spring but chose to drive somewhere this year, mostly because their 15-year-old dog named Doc Holliday couldn't be left at a kennel. They settled on the Black Hills because it is a drivable destination with a wide range of sights and experiences.

"It's our family trip, so if we needed to pay a little more for gas, it's no big deal," said Ryan Foley, who had just finished a scenic helicopter flight in Keystone with wife Alexis and daughters Amelia and Mabel.

While it may seem counterintuitive, South Dakota tourism secretary Jim Hagen said the Rushmore State's extensive travel industry could actually benefit from higher gas prices.

In an interview with News Watch, Hagen said South Dakota has outperformed other states in prior years when gas prices were high or rising.

Furthermore, recent national surveys show that 90% of Americans said they will travel this summer despite higher costs, and that many are considering driving to a destination rather than flying, Hagen said.

"They want to travel regionally, and they're opting for that over more expensive, long-haul air travel trips or more expensive, longer road trips," he said. "They're going to travel to destinations that are closer to home. And the silver lining is that South Dakota is seen as a regional-drive market and because we really are the ultimate road trip destination."

After their trip to the state, the Foleys appear to agree.

Ryan Foley owns a real estate firm and Alexis is a school counselor, so the Foleys had a solid but not extravagant spending budget. In the Black Hills, they were able to pack a ton of experiences into their visit, including stops at Wind Cave National Park and Mount Rushmore National Memorial, and scenic drives on the Needles Highway and through Custer State Park.

They stayed in an Airbnb rental, ate at local restaurants and "received good value for our dollar," Ryan Foley said.

"It's been affordable, but the most important thing was being together with the family, and seeing all this," he said. "These are memories we're going to have forever."

Nation's birthday a potential tourism driver

The 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, also known as the country's semiquincentennial, will be celebrated across the state this summer.

As a result, Hagen sees strong tourism potential for South Dakota, both by residents and visitors.

Surveys show a majority of potential travelers are interested in American history, and that visitation to national parks is up 18% so far this year, which bodes well for a state with a patriotic vibe and several parks and monuments.

Rapid City, which promotes itself as the City of Presidents, will capitalize on the country's 250th anniversary with the Real America Birthday Bash planned for downtown on July 1-4. The U.S. Air Force Academy band will play on July 1, drone shows are slated for July 2-3, and a parade and fireworks show are on the calendar. The festivities will include vendors, food trucks, a beer garden and live music shows.

The Black Hills region as a whole hopes to benefit from the nation's big birthday, including the fireworks show planned for Mount Rushmore on July 3. Gov. Larry Rhoden has invited President Trump, but no official announcement has been made.

"With the 250th and the fireworks, we're hoping for a good season," said Keystone clothing store owner

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Bria Dillavou.

With some uncertainty looming for summer 2026, Dillavou ordered the typical number of products for the two stores she owns with husband Corey – Mackabee Boutique and Mount Rushmore T-shirts – in the Keystone Mall just down the hill from Mount Rushmore.

"In general, vendors nationwide have been offering a lot more patriotic gear and souvenirs this year," she said as she unpacked shirts in her store.

Dillavou said she hears from a lot of tourists from the East who stop in Sioux Falls and the Black Hills on their way to points west, including Yellowstone National Park.

"Our experience has been that people are still taking family trips, especially if they can drive to their destination," she said.

Major events across the state in 2026

While the Black Hills may benefit from the 250th and, as usual, from the 86th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally on Aug. 7-16, tourism operators elsewhere across the state are optimistic for a strong year.

Sioux Falls is increasingly seen as a strong regional tourism market for shoppers and "foodies" who enjoy varied cuisines, said Teri Schmidt, CEO of Experience Sioux Falls.

The city and the rest of eastern South Dakota are attractive for visitors who want a family-friendly place to attend a wide range of annual events, including the Rock the Country Music Festival in late June, and the Sioux Falls Airshow and Hot Summer Nites car show in July.

Hunting, fishing, camping and other outdoor activities remain major draws for other East River locales, including the Glacial Lakes area in the northeast and the Missouri River in the central and southeast parts of the state.

Travel South Dakota, the tourism agency led by Hagen, spent most of its roughly \$13 million advertising budget on neighboring states or markets that have shown success in the past, such as Chicago. Visits by Canadians remain down for the second year amid an ongoing trade war and vows by President Donald Trump about annexing the nation's northern neighbor.

South Dakota what would be considered a so-so year for tourism in 2025, with 15 million visitors spending an estimated \$5.2 billion, a 1.1% increase in revenues over 2024.

Other than the COVID-19 slowdown in 2020, when the state saw 12.6 million visitors spend \$3.4 billion, South Dakota has seen a slow but steady rise in both categories over the past decade.

Visit South Dakota touts the fiscal power of the state tourism industry with a list of data points on its website. The agency said tourism generated 4.7% of the state's overall economy and 16.5% of all state sales tax collections last year, a total of \$406 million. The agency said that tourism supports more than 59,000 jobs and that without tourism, each South Dakota household would have paid \$1,121 more in taxes in 2025.

Hagen said that last year, economic concerns caused trepidation among tourists, a sentiment not shown in traveler surveys this year.

"This year, I think people are like, 'We've had it. Let's get out, let's go have fun, let's travel, even if they'll be looking for good value along the way,'" he said.

And yet, some concern over gas prices

Schmidt said she and other tourism officials are keeping a wary eye on the national economy, which has been soft.

"The things that worry us are gas prices, airline prices and the overall economic condition of the country," Schmidt said. "If gas goes to 5 bucks a gallon, we don't know how people are going to respond and we could be looking at a much different situation."

Schmidt said tightening consumer budgets could prompt some visitors to shorten planned visits or cull back typical spending levels. The early months of 2026 have been flat or only slightly up for visits and tourism spending, which will put more pressure on tourism businesses to have a strong summer to raise revenues into the black, she said.

Experience Sioux Falls has broadened its marketing efforts beyond the typical five-state neighboring region and more into the national market to potentially attract new tourists in addition to those who have

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visited in the past. Sioux Falls and South Dakota overall provide very good value for the tourism dollar, which will help during a challenging economy, she said.

"Our marketing has been strong, if not stronger than ever, but the competition for the tourism dollar also remains strong," Schmidt said.

To date, visits to the Experience Sioux Falls website have been up, providing Schmidt and others with some hope. "Are we concerned? Of course we are. But we're also very optimistic," she said.

A boost in the spring and fall?

Michelle Thomson, CEO of the Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association, said the high cost of living and rising fuel prices could drive more tourists to travel in the spring and fall shoulder seasons, when they anticipate lower prices.

Travelers are also more indecisive and are waiting longer to make reservations, which can add stress to tourism operators who like to see things booked out well in advance.

Rapid City and the Black Hills should see a strong year for revenue, with the Sturgis rally and the nation's 250th birthday leading the way, Thomson said.

"With the 250th, we have the potential to bring in people from across the country because we have such a patriotic experience here, and that's not just the fireworks," she said.

Thomson said national research shows that potential visitors are aware that the price of a vacation is rising but also that they aren't overly concerned.

"People are anticipating spending more, but they want to have those experiences and are willing to pay a little bit more for it," Thomson said.

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

Kuwait accuses Iran of sending an armed Revolutionary Guard team to attack an island in nation

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Kuwait on Tuesday accused Iran of sending an armed Revolutionary Guard team to attack an island in the Middle East nation.

Iran didn't immediately acknowledge the allegation by Kuwait, which came under repeated attack by Iran in the war.

Kuwait said that a team of six armed members of the Guard tried to infiltrate Bubiyan Island in the northwest corner of the Persian Gulf near Iraq and Iran.

It accused the team of planning to carry out "hostile acts."

Kuwait said that it detained four of the men, while two escaped. Kuwait that said one of its security officials had been wounded in the attack.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel sent Iron Dome anti-missile batteries and personnel to operate them to the United Arab Emirates to defend the country during the Iran war, the U.S. ambassador to Israel said Tuesday.

The comments by Mike Huckabee underline the growing defense relationship between Israel and the UAE, countries long suspicious of Iran, as a shaky ceasefire still holds in the Iran war. It represents the first publicly acknowledged deployment of Israel's military to the Emirates, a federation of seven sheikdoms on the Arabian Peninsula home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

However, the narrow Strait of Hormuz remains in Tehran's chokehold and negotiations between the U.S. and Iran appear at a standstill for the moment — raising the risk of the conflict breaking out again. U.S. President Donald Trump is traveling this week to China for a summit with Xi Jinping, where Iran will likely be a topic. Beijing long has been a buyer of sanctioned Iranian crude oil and has been hurt by the strait's closure, which has sparked a global energy crisis.

Huckabee, a Baptist minister, former governor of Arkansas and one-time presidential candidate, made

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the comment on stage at an event in Tel Aviv, Israel.

"I'd like to say a word of appreciation for United Arab Emirates, the first Abraham accord member," Huckabee said at the Tel Aviv Conference. "Just look at the benefits. Israel just sent them Iron Dome batteries and personnel to help operate them."

The United Arab Emirates diplomatically recognized Israel in 2020. That drew criticism from Iran, long Israel's main regional enemy. Iran did not immediately respond to Huckabee's remarks, though it has repeatedly suggested over the years that Israel maintained a military and intelligence presence in the Emirates.

Israeli deployment comes as UAE signals strength

The UAE and Israel did not immediately respond to a request for comment over the acknowledgment by Huckabee. However, Huckabee's remarks came after the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, was quoted as saying the same during an event at the Israeli mission there Monday night — suggesting this was an intentional release of the information, likely with the Emiratis' and Israelis' blessing.

It comes as the UAE has faced Iranian missile and drone fire even after the ceasefire was reached in the war and has been trying to signal to nervous investors and the public it remains open for business and safe. The UAE also has closed down Iranian government-linked sites in the country since the war began. The Emirates long has been used by both the Iranian government and average Iranians as a place to safely do business offshore from the Islamic Republic.

On Thursday during a visit to the Emirates by Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, his Emirati counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan accompanied him to an air base where Egyptian pilots and Rafael fighter jets were stationed — the first acknowledgment of a detachment operating in the UAE. Sheikh Mohammed and the UAE strongly backed el-Sissi as he rose to power in 2013 and in the years since.

Huckabee urges other Gulf states to recognize Israel

Huckabee added that he was "very optimistic" that additional countries in the region will soon join the Abraham Accords, the 2020 diplomatic recognition deal that also included the Gulf Arab kingdom of Bahrain, for formal relations with Israel.

However, many Arab states remain incensed by Israel's wide-ranging military campaigns after Hamas' 2023 attack on the country, which has seen the Gaza Strip leveled and Iran's allies attacked across the wider Mideast. Israel now controls territory in Lebanon and Syria as well.

Huckabee in his remarks also sought to shore up U.S. support for the recent war, suggesting that "Israel is the appetizer, America has always been the entrée" for Iran's theocracy.

"The Gulf states now understood they will have to make a choice — is it more likely they will be attacked by Iran or Israel?" Huckabee asked. "They see that Israel helped us and Iran attacked us. Israel is not trying to take over your land, and is not sending missiles to you."

Bahrain sentences two dozen over alleged Iran ties

Meanwhile Tuesday, prosecutors in Bahrain said at least two dozen people were handed prison sentences on Tuesday on charges including espionage and conspiring with Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. They said three were sentenced to life. Others received shorter Iran-related sentences.

Bahrain — an island nation ruled by a Sunni Muslim monarchy with a Shiite-majority population — has sentenced dozens on Iran-related charges since the start of the war. Prosecutors and the Interior Ministry have alleged that Iran maintains cells that carry out espionage and help identify targets there. Rights groups say the island nation has widened a crackdown on dissidents during the war, as well as on Shiites.

UK's Starmer defiant as calls for his resignation grow and a minister quits

By BRIAN MELLEY and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer told members of his Cabinet on Tuesday that he has no intention of resigning as calls within his Labour Party for him to step down grew louder.

Starmer is trying to shore up support within his Cabinet following a febrile few days in the wake of hefty losses for the Labour Party in local elections last week, which if repeated in a national election would see

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it overwhelmingly ejected from power.

The meeting, which lasted about an hour, took place after more than 70 Labour backbenchers, or nearly a fifth of the party's representation in the House of Commons, said Starmer should stand down, or at least set out a timetable for his departure. However, no one has yet announced they will stand as a candidate for the party leadership, directly challenging Starmer.

First resignation

On Tuesday, junior minister Miatta Fahnbulleh became the first member of his government to step down, urging Starmer "to do the right thing for the country" and set a timetable for his departure.

Fahnbulleh, who is considered to be on the left of the party, said she was proud of her service, but that the government hadn't acted with the vision, pace and mandate for change it had been given by voters.

"Nor have we governed as a Labour Party clear about our values and strong in our convictions," she said.

Starmer defiant

Despite winning a landslide election victory in July 2024, Labour's popularity has sunk and Starmer is getting much of the blame.

The reasons are varied, including a series of policy missteps, a perceived lack of vision, a struggling British economy and questions over his judgment — especially over his appointment of Peter Mandelson as U.K. ambassador to Washington despite the envoy's ties to the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

At the start of the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Starmer said he took responsibility for the losses in last week's local elections across the U.K. but that he would fight on. Labour was squeezed from right and left, losing votes to both the anti-immigrant Reform UK and the "eco-populist" Green Party, as well as nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. The result reflects the increasing fragmentation of U.K. politics, long dominated by Labour and the Conservatives.

Starmer said that there's a process to oust a leader and that it hadn't been triggered.

Under Labour's rules, candidates must have the support of a fifth of the party's House of Commons lawmakers — a number that currently stands at 81.

"The country expects us to get on with governing," Starmer said. "The past 48 hours have been destabilizing for government and that has a real economic cost for our country and for families."

That cost was evident in financial markets on Tuesday, with the interest rate charged on British government bonds up by more than those of comparable nations — that shows that investors are putting a higher price on taking on government debt.

Some voices of support

As Cabinet ministers left 10 Downing Street, some voiced their support for the embattled prime minister.

Works and Pensions Secretary Pat McFadden said nobody publicly challenged Starmer at the meeting, while Business Secretary Peter Kyle said the prime minister was showing "really steadfast leadership."

Health Secretary Wes Streeting, long believed to be preparing for a leadership challenge against Starmer, did not comment as he left the meeting.

"Wes Streeting, do you want the job, or not?" one person yelled from across the street. "Are you measuring the curtains?"

He was among senior ministers who dodged a barrage of shouted questions from a gaggle of reporters outside.

Though no one in his Cabinet has challenged Starmer, he will be aware that someone else within the parliamentary party could trigger the leadership process.

The next U.K. national election doesn't have to be held until 2029, but British politics allows parties to change leader midterm without the need for a general election.

Starmer had hoped to regain momentum with a speech on Monday intended to kickstart his fightback, and an ambitious set of legislative plans to be set out by King Charles III at the State Opening of Parliament on Wednesday.

Ukraine officials name Zelenskyy's ex-chief of staff as a suspect in money-laundering probe

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Two national agencies fighting corruption in Ukraine have named Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's former chief of staff as an official suspect in a major graft investigation.

Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office announced late Monday that Andriy Yermak is suspected in an alleged 460-million-hryvnia (\$10.5 million) money-laundering scheme.

The announcement coincided with, but was not connected to, the end of a three-day U.S.-brokered ceasefire that decreased the fighting but failed to stop it altogether as Russia's invasion of its neighbor stretches into its fifth year with no sign of a peace settlement within reach.

Ukraine offered to extend the pause in hostilities, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said. But he reported Tuesday that Russia launched over 200 drones against Ukraine overnight, striking civilian infrastructure and killing at least one person and wounding another six.

"It is time to strengthen our positions and force Moscow to end the war," Sybiha said on X. Russian President Vladimir Putin "must realize that it will only get worse for him."

Western analysts say Ukraine's battlefield position has recently improved as it deploys cutting-edge drone technology to hold Russia's bigger army at bay.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Tuesday that its air defenses intercepted 30 Ukrainian drones over Russian regions on the border with Ukraine.

Zelenskyy holds talks with CEO of US firm Palantir

Zelenskyy said Tuesday he met in Kyiv with the CEO of Palantir Technologies, Alex Karp, as part of Ukraine's growing cooperation with the U.S. defense sector.

The Ukrainian leader said in a social media post that Ukraine and Palantir "can be useful to each other."

"We discussed directions of technological development both in the context of combat operations and civilian needs," Zelenskyy said.

Palantir Technologies is an artificial intelligence software company that helps global defense agencies. It specializes in software platforms that pull together and analyze large amounts of data and has been partnering with Ukraine for several years.

AI can help combatants quickly sift and decipher a huge volume of battlefield information, enabling more accurate attacks, among other things.

Graft investigation embarrasses Zelenskyy

Corruption investigators said in an announcement on the Telegram messaging app that the investigation into Yermak is ongoing.

The move is a step short of formally charging Yermak, who resigned in November. He was the country's lead negotiator in talks with the U.S and left during the scandal that brought the biggest threat to Zelenskyy's government since Russia's full-scale invasion.

The investigation is deeply embarrassing for the Ukrainian leader as he pushes for his country to be admitted as a member of the European Union, a process which likely will take years. Endemic corruption is one of the obstacles slowing Ukraine's admission.

Yermak was a trusted confidant of Zelenskyy, who resisted persistent pressure to replace him, and a powerful figure in the government.

Zelenskyy made no public comment on the anti-graft agencies' announcement, but his press officer Dmytro Lytvyn said "the investigation is ongoing, it's early to draw conclusions."

Any charges against Yermak may take months

Investigators said Yermak is suspected of being involved in laundering money through construction projects near Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital. They searched his home in November. No other suspects have been named.

Yermak's attorney, Ihor Fomin, called the suspicion notice groundless and denied his client's involvement

in the alleged laundering of 460 million hryvnias through an elite construction project outside Kyiv.

"In my view, this entire situation has been provoked by public pressure," Fomin said in an interview with Ukrainian public broadcaster Suspilne.

A decision on whether to bring formal charges against Yermak could still take months.

At the time of Yermak's resignation, Zelenskyy said he was rebooting the presidential office and thanked Yermak for his work on peace negotiations.

Shipping industry fears fuel shortages as Iran war squeezes bunker fuel supply

By ANTON L. DELGADO and CHAN HO-HIM Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Ship operators rely on a sludgelike substance known as bunker fuel to keep vessels running. The Iran war's closure of the Strait of Hormuz has choked off the supply of this fuel that powers the global maritime industry and its largest refueling hub in Asia.

Bunker fuel is a literal bottom of the barrel product: heavier and dirtier than the more expensive kinds of refined crude oil used by other vehicles like cars and airplanes, it sinks to the bottom of storage containers.

But it helps move the 80% of globally traded goods that are transported by sea, and experts say that means a shortage of bunker fuel will translate to higher shipping costs, increase consumer prices and hurt the bottom lines of businesses worldwide.

That will be an issue first in Asia, which relies heavily on Middle Eastern oil. In Singapore, the world's biggest refueling hub for bunker fuel, reserves are dwindling and prices are spiking.

Shipping companies are trying to adapt to the energy shock, reducing vessel speeds and revising schedules to cut costs in the short term while making plans to acquire ships that can run on alternative fuels.

But some companies won't survive this triage for long, according to Henning Gloystein of the Eurasia Group consultancy firm, who warned that the pain will spread beyond Asia through global supply chains.

Southeast Asia turns to 'energy triage'

Asia, which was hit first and hardest by the energy shock, has adopted various forms of "energy triage" to cope, increasing its use of coal, buying more crude oil from Russia and reviving plans to develop nuclear power.

But Asia is bracing for further impacts as energy reserves dwindle and government subsidies dry up.

More than half of global seaborne trade moved through Asian ports in 2024, according to United Nations data, so what happens there will have global consequences.

For now, Singapore's supplies of bunker fuel have held up even as the price races up.

But the prolonged cutoff from major sources of the heavier crude oil needed for bunker fuel, like Iraq and Kuwait, will cause shortages, said Natalia Katona of the commodity site OilPrice.

"We just see the price in Singapore going up, up, up," Katona said.

Before the war, bunker fuel in Singapore cost about \$500 per metric ton (\$450 per U.S. ton). That went up to more than \$800 (\$725 per U.S. ton) as of early May.

Fuel shortages drive consumer costs

Shipping companies are absorbing the brunt of the costs for now, said June Goh, an oil analyst for market intelligence firm Sparta Commodities, but this may soon "pass on to the customers."

The daily cost of the Iran war for the global shipping industry is 340 million euros (nearly \$400 million), according to the European Federation for Transport and Environment.

"Bunker fuel shortages tend to feed through to shipping costs more quickly than many other cost pressures," said Oliver Miloschewsky of risk consultancy firm Aon.

Individual product impact may appear incremental but the cumulative effect of higher shipping costs "can ripple across supply chains and ultimately influence consumer prices across a broad range of sectors," he said.

Singaporean consumers are also feeling the pinch in other ways as local ferries increase fares and luxury cruise liners tack on fuel surcharges.

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Ship operators face limited options

Shippers have limited choices to deal with the situation, Miloschewsky said. They can pay more for fuel or implement fuel-saving measures like slowing shipping or suspending voyages.

The average speed of bulk carriers and container ships has slowed globally by around 2% since the war began on Feb. 28, industry group Clarksons Research reported.

High prices are also driving more interest in green fuels, said Håkan Agnevall of marine and energy technology manufacturer Wartsila.

The good news is the technology to create lower-emitting fuels exists, he said. The bad news is production isn't yet at scale and greener fuels are often more expensive.

Though U.S. President Donald Trump derailed efforts to shift global shipping away from fossil fuels in 2025, Agnevall said the current conflict could prompt strategically minded companies and countries to renew their push toward greener alternatives.

Rising fossil fuel prices are narrowing the cost gap. "That improves the business case for green fuels," he said.

The Caravel Group owns one of the world's largest ship management companies, Fleet Management Limited, which oversees more than 120 shipbuilding projects.

About a third of ships that the company is managing the construction of will be "dual fuel capable," meaning they can run on both conventional bunker fuel and alternatives such as liquefied natural gas, CEO Angad Banga told The Associated Press.

Ship owners are willing to pay a premium to have vessels that can switch between fuels because "in a volatile environment optionality has a measurable economic value," he said.

Alternative fuels are not yet as flexible as conventional bunker fuel, Banga said. While there are more than 890 LNG-fueled vessels in operation globally, a lack of supporting infrastructure has created bottlenecks for them.

But the industry is catching up and limits on bunker fuel are driving even more interest in LNG-capable ships, he said. "That progress is real."

Trump and Xi appear intent on keeping deep differences over Iran war from overshadowing China summit

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is set to leave Tuesday for Beijing to meet with President Xi Jinping after weeks of trying, and failing, to persuade the Chinese government to use its considerable leverage to prod Iran to agree to U.S. terms to end the two-month war — or at the very least, reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump has veered between venting that China, the world's biggest buyer of Iranian oil, hasn't done more to get the Islamic Republic in line, and acknowledging that Xi's government helped de-escalate the conflict last month by nudging Tehran back to ceasefire talks when negotiations wobbled.

But ahead of the U.S. leader's high-stakes visit, the White House has set low expectations that Trump will be able to persuade Xi to change China's posture.

Instead, the administration seems determined not to let differences on Iran overshadow efforts to make headway on other difficult matters in the complicated relationship — ranging from trade to further Chinese cooperation to block exports of fentanyl precursors.

"We don't want this to be something that derails the broader relationship or the agreements that might come out of our meeting in Beijing," U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said on Bloomberg TV last week.

US administration sanctioned China ahead of the trip

Beijing publicly insists that it wants to see the war end and has been working diplomatically behind the scenes to help its ally Pakistan push to broker a peace agreement. It has also sent a "subtle message of discontent to Iran" for closing the Strait of Hormuz, and to the U.S. for its blockade of Iranian shipping,

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said Ahmed Aboudouh, a specialist on China's influence in the Middle East with the London-based Chatham House think tank.

"They are very cautious, risk averse, and they don't want to be involved in anything that would drag them into something that they don't consider their problem," he said.

In recent days, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent have stepped up their calls for China to use its influence to help reopen the strait, through which about 20% of the world's crude flowed before the war began.

The State Department announced Friday it was sanctioning four entities, including three China-based firms, for providing sensitive satellite imagery that enables Iranian military strikes against U.S. forces in the Middle East. Earlier, the Treasury Department moved to target Chinese oil refineries accused of purchasing oil from Tehran, as well as shippers of the oil. The sanctions cut off the companies from the U.S. financial system and penalize anyone who does business with them.

Beijing has called the sanctions "illegal unilateral pressure" and enacted a blocking statute — passed in 2021 and never used until now — that prohibits any Chinese entity from recognizing or complying with the sanctions.

Ahead of Trump's arrival, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi last week hosted his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Beijing. The Chinese foreign minister used the moment to defend Iran's right to develop civilian nuclear energy.

Xi has also offered implicit criticism of the U.S. over the war. He has said that safeguarding international rule of law is paramount, adding it "must not be selectively applied or disregarded," nor should the world be allowed to revert "to the law of the jungle."

Both China and the US want to avoid a return to a tariff war

Trump on Monday downplayed differences with China over Iran and underscored that Xi wants to see the strait reopened. "He'd like to see it get done," Trump said of the Chinese leader.

Like Trump, Xi also has plenty of reason to not let differences over Iran impact other facets of the relationship, analysts say. China imports about half its crude oil and almost one-third of its liquefied natural gas from Middle Eastern countries affected by the closure of the strait, according to China's General Administration of Customs.

Beijing wants to guard against further deterioration of the U.S.-China relationship — something that would add further challenges to its economy.

"I think for Xi, a win is continued stability without surrender," said Craig Singleton, senior director for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies' China program. "He wants the summit to validate China's superpower status, preserve the tariff predictability, and to reaffirm that Washington has to deal with Beijing on Beijing's terms."

Yet, since the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran in late February, there have been difficult moments between Trump and Xi that threatened to set back the relative stability in their relationship.

China has long supported Iran's ballistic missile program and backed it with dual-use industrial components that can be used for missile production, according to the U.S. government.

Last month, Trump threatened to impose a 50% tariff on China after reports that Beijing was preparing to deliver a shipment of new air defense systems to Iran, but later backed away from the threat, claiming that he had received written assurance from Xi that he would not provide Tehran with weaponry. Days later, Trump said cryptically that the U.S. Navy had intercepted a Chinese vessel carrying a "gift" for Iran. He has not offered further explanation.

"There have been moments where it seemed like it was going to spill over," said Patricia Kim, who co-leads the Assessing China Project at the Brookings Institution. "But I think, again, the two sides are pretty invested in not allowing this to destabilize the broader relationship."

Both Trump and Xi may be eager to avoid creating dark economic clouds, as they did last year, when the two powers appeared on the precipice of a massive trade war.

Trump had set tariffs on Chinese goods at 145% and China announced a further tightening of rare-earth

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export controls that would have hurt U.S. industry — before the governments backed off from inflicting maximalist penalties on each other. The two sides reached a fragile truce in their long-running trade disputes in October.

Trump and other administration officials have made the case that the Iran conflict — particularly the closure of the strait — has caused greater harm to China and its Pacific neighbors than it has to the United States, which is far less dependent on Middle East oil.

"China is an export-driven economy. That means they depend on other countries to buy from them," Rubio told reporters last week, making the case that it was in China's interest for Iran to let traffic resume. "You can't buy from them if you can't ship it there, and you can't buy from them if your economy is being destroyed by what Iran is doing," he said.

But for now, China has shown little interest in wading deeper into the conflict and has appeared reluctant to be seen siding with Washington.

"It will be difficult to get the Chinese deeply involved under any circumstances," said Kurt Campbell, a former deputy secretary of state during the Biden administration and chair of The Asia Group. "They will want to be careful because they can see political quicksand as well as the next guy."

A Cannes Film Festival light on Hollywood but not lacking in star power kicks off in France

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — The red carpet has been rolled out at the 79th Cannes Film Festival in the South of France.

The French Riviera festival beginning Tuesday will include 12 days of nonstop world premieres before culminating May 23 with the presentation of the Palme d'Or, the festival's top honor and one of the film industry's most prestigious awards.

The festivities kick off with the opening-night film, "The Electric Kiss," a French period-comedy, and the awarding of an honorary Palme d'Or to the "Lord of the Rings" director Peter Jackson.

What isn't at Cannes has been as buzzed about as much as what is. Hollywood is largely absent this year.

While blockbusters like "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Elvis" have touched down at previous incarnations, studio films this year have been either scared away by the possibility of a rocky reception or by the high cost of flying in A-listers to the Cote d'Azur. The closest thing in Cannes' slate is an anniversary celebration for "Fast & Furious."

Speaking to members of the press Monday, Cannes artistic director Thierry Frémaux said Hollywood "is reshaping" in the midst of Paramount Skydance's proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery.

"I hope the studio films will come back," Frémaux said.

Cannes has become better known for its lengthy standing ovations than its boos. This year, a long list of big-name filmmakers will have center stage.

Among the filmmakers set to unveil new movies are Pedro Almodóvar ("Bitter Christmas"), James Gray ("Paper Tiger"), Na Hong-jin ("Hope"), Pawel Pawlikowski ("Fatherland") and Ryusuke Hamaguchi ("All of a Sudden").

If Cannes has waned as a global launchpad for studio releases, it has grown as a breeding ground for Oscar contenders.

Two years ago, Sean Baker's "Anora" won the Palme in Cannes before winning best picture. Last year, Cannes selections like "Sentimental Value," "The Secret Agent" and "It Was Just an Accident" went on to play prominent roles in awards season.

More often than not, the specialty distributor Neon has been at the forefront of the Cannes-to-Oscars pipeline. Neon has backed the past six Palme d'Or winners, an unprecedented streak that it may be poised to extend. Neon is attached to more than a quarter of the 22 films in competition for the Palme d'Or.

On Tuesday, the jury deciding that award and others will hold a news conference before beginning their sequestered movie watching. South Korean filmmaker Park Chan-wook is serving as president of the nine-

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member panel, along with Demi Moore, Chloé Zhao, Stellan Skarsgård and others.

How much any of this will serve as backdrop for "The White Lotus" remains to be seen. The fourth season of Mike White's acclaimed HBO series is based around a trip to Cannes. Last month, the show began shooting on the French Riviera.

While Cannes may be light on big Hollywood movies, it isn't lacking in stars. Set to appear over the next two weeks are Kristen Stewart, Barbra Streisand, Adam Driver, Javier Bardem, Michael Fassbender, Cate Blanchett, Rami Malek, Sebastian Stan, Sandra Hüller and many others.

Eurovision song competition starts with the first semifinal after boycott over Israel

By PHILIPP JENNE Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Competition starts Tuesday at the Eurovision Song Contest, with divisions over Israel's participation hanging over the 70th birthday of the over-the-top pop music extravaganza.

Host city Vienna has been bedecked in hearts and the contest's "United by Music" motto for a week in which singers and bands from 35 countries will compete onstage for the continent's musical crown. But five countries — Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Iceland — are boycotting to protest Israel's inclusion.

Several pro-Palestinian demonstrations are planned in Vienna during Eurovision week, and security is tight, with police officers from across Austria deployed in the capital, and support from forces in neighboring Germany.

Last month a 21-year-old Austrian man accused of pledging allegiance to the Islamic State group pleaded guilty to plotting to attack a Taylor Swift concert in Vienna in 2024, and the head of Austria's DSN intelligence service, Sylvia Mayer, said "the terror threat posed by Islamist terror groups, as well as Iran-affiliated groups, is still at a high level."

Israeli singer Noam Bettan is among 15 acts competing for votes from viewers and national juries in Tuesday's semifinal at the Wiener Stadthalle arena. The top 10 will go through to Saturday's grand final, along with 10 from Thursday's second semifinal. The U.K., France, Germany and Italy automatically qualify because they are among the contest's biggest funders. Austria, last year's winner, goes through to the final as host country.

Bettan is seeking to get Israel, which came second in 2025, into Saturday's final with the ballad "Michelle." Like last year's Israeli competitor, Yuval Raphael, he has practiced singing while being booed.

Hoping to cement its status as bookmakers' favorite is Finland, with the intense "Liekinheitin" ("Flame-thrower") by violinist Linda Lampenius and pop singer Pete Parkkonen.

Other competitors in Tuesday's semifinal include Greece's Akylas with fan-favorite party-rap track "Ferto" ("Bring It"); Portuguese quintet Bandidos do Cante with the soulful "Rosa"; and singer Senhit, representing tiny San Marino with "Superstar," a party anthem featuring a guest appearance by Boy George.

Long a forum for good-natured — and sometimes more pointed — national rivalries, Eurovision has found it hard to separate pop and politics in recent years. Russia was expelled in 2022 after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The 2024 contest in Malmo, Sweden, and last year's event in Basel, Switzerland, saw pro-Palestinian protests that called for Israel to be expelled over its conduct of its war against Hamas in Gaza and allegations it ran a rule-breaking marketing campaign to get votes for its contestant.

When organizers declined to kick Israel out, five countries announced in December that they would not participate this year.

The European Broadcasting Union, which runs Eurovision, has toughened voting rules in response to the vote-rigging allegations, halving the number of votes per person to 10 and tightening safeguards against "suspicious or coordinated voting activity."

Dean Vuletic, author of "Postwar Europe and the Eurovision Song Contest," is confident Eurovision can

weather the latest storms.

"We'll see demonstrations, but we'll also see a lot of colorful events going on which will really represent what Eurovision is about, which is bringing Europeans together," he said.

"If you look at the history of Eurovision, it's gone through so many crises, so many political challenges, so many geopolitical changes in Europe, and it's always managed to survive."

In a trial pitting him against Elon Musk, nobody has more to lose than OpenAI CEO Sam Altman

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writers

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — In a trial featuring a clash between Elon Musk and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, neither of the tech titans has emerged as an overly sympathetic character. But nobody has more to lose than Altman, who is expected to take the stand this week to defend himself.

Already, testimony about Altman's turbulent tenure at the ChatGPT maker has become prime fodder for internet jokes. One piece of evidence that has inspired countless memes was a text exchange between Altman and a company officer, Mira Murati, in 2023 during his short-lived ouster as CEO, when Altman asked if things were moving "directionally good or bad" and she wrote back: "Sam this is very bad."

Musk, the world's richest man, is seeking Altman's second ouster from the company leadership as part of a civil lawsuit accusing him of betraying their shared vision for OpenAI. Since its start as a nonprofit funded primarily by Musk, Open AI has evolved into a capitalistic venture now valued at \$852 billion.

Even if Musk loses, the trial has invited further scrutiny of Altman's leadership at a pivotal time for the company and its competition with Musk's own AI firm and another rival, Anthropic, formed by a group of seven ex-OpenAI leaders. All three firms are moving toward planned initial public offerings that are expected to be some of the largest ever.

A jury that's already heard about Altman's character from a parade of his former allies and adversaries will ultimately decide the verdict. But the repercussions could reverberate widely.

"This is not looking good for any of them and I think that that's a little bit unfortunate for the AI industry at a time when the public perception of AI is quite negative and seems to be getting worse," said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute.

Musk warned Altman would be one of America's 'most hated' men

The lawsuit accuses Altman and his top lieutenant, Greg Brockman, of double-crossing Musk by straying from the San Francisco company's founding mission to be an altruistic steward of a revolutionary technology. The lawsuit alleges they shifted into a moneymaking mode behind his back.

Shortly before the trial began, Musk abandoned a bid for damages for himself and instead is seeking an unspecified amount of money to be paid to fund the altruistic efforts of OpenAI's charitable arm. In a text exchange with Brockman proposing a possible settlement, Musk warned that Brockman and Altman "will be the most hated men in America" as a result of the trial.

While Musk, the head of SpaceX, Tesla and a slew of other companies, was well known by the San Francisco Bay Area jury pool, fewer knew who Altman was before the start of the trial, even if they were familiar with ChatGPT.

As the trial has played out in a federal courtroom in Oakland, California over the last two weeks, jurors have heard from witnesses including OpenAI ex-board members Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley, who spoke about the decision to fire Altman in 2023 before they were themselves ousted from the board of directors when Altman returned to his role.

In video testimony last week, Toner said a starting point for the decision to oust Altman was when OpenAI co-founder Ilya Sutskever, a respected AI scientist, reached out to confide some of his own concerns.

"A phrase we used was 'a pattern of behavior,' so no one single cause," Toner said. "The pattern of behavior related to his honesty and candor, his resistance of board oversight."

Sutskever was instrumental in the unsuccessful attempt to oust Altman but later said he regretted his role in the shakeup. In his own testimony Monday, Sutskever confirmed that he wrote a 2023 memo to

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OpenAI's board that characterized Altman as pitting his executives against one another and exhibiting a "consistent pattern of lying" that was causing a loss of trust and productivity.

Sutskever said Altman's behavior contributed to an environment that was "not conducive" to the company's goals, including its mission to safely build artificial general intelligence. He said he later backtracked and supported Altman's reinstatement because he was concerned about what would happen to a company he worked hard to create and "cared very much about."

"I felt that, had I not done this, the company would have been destroyed, and I felt that this was a Hail Mary," he testified.

OpenAI begins presenting its side

The trial has carried risks also for Musk, who is pursuing an initial public offering this summer for his rocket ship maker, SpaceX, which could make him the world's first trillionaire. Among the witnesses has been Shvonne Zilis, a former OpenAI board member who served as a conduit between Musk and OpenAI's leaders and also didn't disclose that Musk was the father of her two young twins, according to trial testimony.

Not until midday Monday, on the third week of the trial, did OpenAI begin calling its own witnesses, starting with Bret Taylor, the current chair of OpenAI's board who painted a more positive portrait of Altman's leadership.

"I think Sam has done a great job as CEO," Taylor said. "He's been forthright with me and the other board members."

Syracuse University professor Shubha Ghosh, an expert in business and technology law, said regardless of the outcome of the case, he has doubts about Altman staying on as CEO of OpenAI in the long run.

"A lot of this might depend upon a testimony," he said. "And I don't know what he's going to say or how he's gonna say it. But even like the best case, movie theater type performance, with all the music playing and the angels descending or whatnot, I don't see him coming off as a fairly strong leader, especially (since) this case has gone this far."

Israeli lawmakers set up a special tribunal and allow for death penalty for Hamas-led 2023 attackers

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli lawmakers approved a bill on Monday setting up a special tribunal that would try and have the authority to sentence to death Palestinians convicted of taking part in the 2023 Hamas-led attack that triggered the war in Gaza.

The measure passed 93-0 in the 120-seat Knesset, or parliament, reflecting widespread support for punishing those found responsible for what was the deadliest attack in Israel's history. The remaining 27 lawmakers were absent or abstained from voting.

Rights groups have criticized the measure, saying it makes the death penalty too easy to impose while also doing away with procedures safeguarding the right to a fair trial. Defendants can appeal their sentences but the appeals have to be heard by a separate, special appeals court rather than regular appeals courts.

Because the bill empowers a panel of judges to hand down the death penalty by a majority vote — and requires the trials to be conducted in a livestreamed Jerusalem courtroom — it has drawn comparisons to the 1962 trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, which was broadcast live on television.

Eichmann was executed by hanging, the last time the death penalty was carried out in Israel, though technically capital punishment remains on the books for acts of genocide, espionage during wartime and certain terror offenses.

Opponents of the bill also say that livestreaming the proceedings before guilt is established risks turning the trials into a spectacle. They have raised questions about the reliability of the evidence that may be presented, saying it could have been extracted by harsh interrogation methods.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 as hostages. Israel's ensuing blistering offensive on Gaza has killed over 72,628 Palestin-

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ians, including at least 846 killed since a ceasefire took hold last October.

That's according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants but says around half the deaths were women and children. The figures by the ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts.

Israeli forces also killed hundreds of militants in battles in the coastal enclave, and took an unknown number of suspects into Israeli custody where they now await trial.

Simcha Rothman, one of the bill's sponsors who is part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition, said the overwhelming consensus for the bill in the Knesset shows Israeli lawmakers can come together "around a common mission."

Several Israeli rights groups — including Hamoked, Adalah and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel — said on Monday that while "justice for the victims of October 7 is a legitimate and urgent imperative," any accountability for the crimes "must be pursued through a process which includes rather than abandons the principles of justice."

The bill is separate from a law passed in March that approved the death penalty for Palestinians convicted of murdering Israelis, a measure harshly condemned by the international community and rights groups as discriminatory and inhumane.

That law applies to future cases and is not retroactive so it could not apply to the October 2023 suspects.

According to the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, the country still holds about 1,300 Palestinians from Gaza without charge in its detention facilities. At least 7,000 Palestinians from Gaza had been held in Israeli custody since October 2023, and 5,000 of them were later released.

The 1,300 number does not include those held on suspicion of attacking Israel on Oct. 7 or involvement in holding the hostages.

Passengers from virus-stricken cruise ship fly to home countries for monitoring

By JOSH FUNK and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The last remaining passengers on a cruise ship hit by a deadly hantavirus outbreak disembarked Monday and boarded flights to more than 20 countries to enter quarantine. A French woman was the latest to be confirmed as infected, while an American was suspected of infection after initial testing.

Passengers began flying home aboard military and government planes Sunday after the MV Hondius anchored in the Canary Islands. Personnel in full-body protective gear and breathing masks escorted the travelers from ship to shore in Tenerife, an effort that concluded Monday.

"If they stayed longer on the ship, the situation could have been difficult," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization. He said citizens of the countries passengers are returning to should know "there is nothing to fear, the risk is low, this is not another COVID."

Three cruise ship passengers have died, and six people with confirmed or suspected cases of hantavirus are being quarantined, according to the WHO. The lab results of the American who tested positive were inconclusive, WHO spokesperson Sarah Tyler said Monday.

Health authorities say it's the first hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship. While there is no cure or vaccine for hantavirus, the WHO says early detection and treatment improves survival rates.

The ship's captain, Jan Dobrogowski, issued a video message Monday praising passengers and crew for their courage and perseverance, and he called for respect for their privacy.

"I could not imagine sailing through these circumstances with a better group of people, guests and crew alike," he said.

New cases in France, United States

The French woman who tested positive for the hantavirus was in intensive care in stable condition at a Paris hospital, French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said Monday. He said four French passengers who returned Sunday tested negative but remained in isolation at the same hospital.

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One of 18 evacuated passengers flown to the U.S. also tested positive for the hantavirus but was not showing symptoms, while another had mild symptoms, U.S. health officials said.

After landing early Monday, 16 American passengers — one of them a British-U.S. dual citizen — were taken to the University of Nebraska Medical Center, which has a federally funded quarantine facility and a biocontainment unit for treating people with highly infectious diseases. They were being assessed to determine if they had close contact with any symptomatic people and their risk levels for spreading the virus.

An American who tested positive for hantavirus on the cruise ship was taken to the Omaha campus' biocontainment unit and will be tested again. The passenger "is doing well and not having symptoms at this time," said Dr. Angela Hewlett, the unit's medical director.

The others taken to Nebraska will be monitored in quarantine for several days. They arrived "in good shape, good spirits," said Dr. Michael Wadman, the quarantine unit's medical director.

Two additional American passengers, a couple, arrived Monday at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta. One of them had mild symptoms and will be tested for hantavirus.

"It doesn't necessarily mean, just because someone has symptoms, that they're going to end up having this illness," said Dr. Brendan Jackson of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some public health experts have accused the U.S. government of being slow to respond to the hantavirus outbreak. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. rejected the notion that cuts at his agency had left the U.S. less prepared.

"We have this under control," Kennedy said Monday, "and we're not worried about it."

WHO recommends close monitoring of former passengers

Oceanwide Expeditions, which owns and operates the cruise ship, said 25 crew and two medical professionals remained on board Monday as the Hondius departed the Canary Islands. It was expected to arrive in Rotterdam on Sunday.

The Hondius left the southern Argentine port of Ushuaia on April 1 and a Dutch passenger died on board April 11. It wasn't until early May that the WHO said it was reacting to a suspected hantavirus outbreak on the ship, which by that time was off the West African island nation of Cape Verde.

South African health authorities said on Monday that the condition of a British man admitted to a hospital in Johannesburg and being treated for hantavirus was gradually improving. He was evacuated from the ship on April 27 after becoming ill.

The Dutch couple who presented the first two cases had traveled through Argentina, Chile and Uruguay before boarding the ship, the WHO said. They visited sites where the species of rat known to carry Andes virus was present.

Health officials say risk to public is low

Hantavirus usually spreads from rodent droppings and is not 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 — which can include fever, chills and muscle aches — usually show between one and eight weeks after exposure.

Tedros of the WHO advised that returning passengers should stay in quarantine, either in their homes or in other facilities, for 42 days. He added that WHO cannot enforce its guidance, and that different countries may handle monitoring of passengers without symptoms in different ways.

Numerous countries have said their people will be quarantined or hospitalized for observation.

Trump says he'll move to suspend federal gasoline tax. He can't do it on his own

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday he will move to suspend the federal tax on gasoline to help Americans shoulder surging fuel prices caused by the Iran war.

The president cannot suspend the federal tax on his own. Congress would have to approve the move. Lawmakers from both parties have pushed for a gas-tax suspension, saying it would provide much-

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needed relief for families and businesses that rely on their cars and trucks to get to work and school and run everyday errands.

As of Monday, the average national gas price was \$4.52 a gallon, according to the AAA motor club, 50% higher than the average price of just under \$3 a gallon before Trump began the war against Iran.

What the gas tax supports

The federal tax is currently set at 18.4 cents per gallon on gasoline and 24.4 cents per gallon on diesel fuel, an amount that does not include state taxes, which often are higher. The tax provides more than \$23 billion per year in revenue for federal highway and public transit programs.

Asked by reporters at the White House how long the tax should be suspended, Trump said, "Until it's appropriate." While the tax is only a small percentage of the price of gas, "it's still money," Trump said.

As gas prices have spiked, the Trump administration has released millions of barrels of oil from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve and temporarily lifted sanctions on some Russian and Iranian oil shipments already at sea. The U.S. is negotiating with countries reliant on Middle East crude to join a coalition to police the Strait of Hormuz, where about one-fifth of the world's traded oil normally flows.

Trump needs Congress — and they're beginning to react

Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri said on social media Monday that he will introduce legislation to suspend the gas tax. Democrats have previously sponsored similar legislation. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., also said in a post on X that she will introduce a bill "to suspend the federal gas tax in light of Trump's recent remarks."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said Monday he has not "been a fan" of a gas tax suspension, but added: "You know, I've got some colleagues out there who think it's a good idea. So, we'll hear them out."

Thune, a Republican from South Dakota, said he'd prefer to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to "normalize gas prices" without legislation. "Obviously, any time you suspend the gas tax, that leaves a big hole in the highway trust fund, which also has implications down the road," he said.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said that "instead of suspending the tax, we should suspend the war."

The ongoing spike in gas prices has set off alarms among some Republicans that it could hurt the party's chances in the midterm elections.

Sen. John Cornyn, who is in a tough runoff race later this month to keep his seat, said he wants to know how roads and bridges would be paid for if the tax is lifted. But he said there's a "difference between a temporary suspension and a permanent suspension."

"A temporary suspension to get through this sort of bumpy time because of the uncertainty about energy prices, I could live with that," he said.

Trump has previously said higher fuel prices are worth paying to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. That hardline message appeared to soften Sunday as Energy Secretary Chris Wright said the Trump administration was "open to all ideas," including a suspension of the gas tax, during an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press."

A bill sponsored by Democratic Sens. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut and Mark Kelly of Arizona would suspend the federal tax through Oct. 1. A similar measure was sponsored in the House by Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas of New Hampshire.

"Trump's war of choice with Iran is driving up gas prices across the country — and Americans shouldn't have to bear the additional economic burden of Trump's reckless decision making," Blumenthal said in introducing the bill.

Kelly told reporters Monday he still prefers his legislation but would take "whatever we can get at this point."

"People need relief," he said.

Several states, including Indiana and Georgia, have recently suspended their taxes to alleviate high prices amid the war. Kentucky and Utah have reduced their state tax. Other states are weighing similar suspensions or tax reductions.

There are drawbacks, industry group says

The gasoline tax is the single largest source of revenue for federal highway and public transit programs.

While proposed bills would offset any lost Highway Trust Fund revenue with general funds, the tax suspension could raise the federal deficit and jeopardize the long-term sustainability of investments for highway and public transit programs, according to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, which represents the transportation construction industry.

The group cites studies showing that many retailers do not pass on the full amount of the gas tax reduction to consumers. Research also suggests that state and federal gas taxes are just one component of a complex pricing scheme that includes the global price of oil and other factors.

Supreme Court halts order for Alabama to use US House map with 2 largely Black districts

By DAVID A. LIEB, KIM CHANDLER and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday set the stage for Alabama to eliminate one of two largely Black congressional districts before this year's midterm elections, creating an opening for Republicans to gain an additional U.S. House seat in a partisan battle for control of the closely divided chamber.

The decision follows a Supreme Court ruling in April that struck down a majority-Black U.S. House district in Louisiana as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, significantly weakening a provision of the federal Voting Rights Act.

Alabama officials had pointed to the Louisiana case as reason for the Supreme Court to end a judicial order to use a court-imposed House map until after the 2030 census. The high court on Monday overturned that order and directed a lower court to reconsider the case in light of the Louisiana decision. That could free the state to instead use a map approved in 2023 by the Republican-led legislature that includes only one district where Black residents comprise a majority.

Anticipating a court reversal, Alabama officials recently enacted a law allowing it to void the results of a May 19 primary for some congressional districts and instead hold a new primary under the revised district boundaries. Alabama had asked for an expedited decision ahead of the primary.

Alabama Republicans praised the decision.

"Today, the Supreme Court vindicated the state's long-held position. Now, the power to draw Alabama's maps goes back to the people's elected representatives. That's our Legislature," Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said in a video statement. Marshall said his job was "to put the legislature in the best possible legal position to draw a congressional map that favors Republicans seven-to-zero." He concluded with the statement, "Stay tuned."

Republican House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter called the decision "a massive victory not just for Alabama, but for conservatives across the country."

In a dissent to Monday's brief ruling, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the Louisiana case had reversed only one of the grounds upon which the Alabama case had been decided. Although the Voting Rights Act violation is gone, Sotomayor said a lower court could still find that Alabama had intentionally discriminated against Black voters in violation of the 14th Amendment.

The decision was a setback for Black residents and groups that had waged a legal fight for several years to get a second Alabama congressional district where Black voters had an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.

"We are witnessing a return to Jim Crow. And anybody who is alarmed by these developments — as everybody should be — better be making a plan to vote in November to put an end to this madness while we still can," NAACP National President Derrick Johnson said in a statement.

Deuel Ross, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorney who argued the Alabama case, said, "We will consider all of our options to fight to protect the rights of these voters and keep the court ordered map in place."

Shalela Dowdy, a plaintiff in the Alabama redistricting case, said she was disappointed in the decision.

"For me, I feel like this is a step backwards towards the Jim Crow era for congressional representation. The state is not going to stop here," Dowdy said, predicting Alabama will eventually go after the remain-

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ing district.

Primaries are just a week away

The decision comes a week ahead of the May 19 primaries, setting up a potentially confusing scenario for voters. Alabama lawmakers last week approved legislation to allow special primaries in four impacted congressional districts if the state is able to switch maps. The special elections would be set by the governor.

Alabama Secretary of State Wes Allen called the decision a "historic win for Alabama voters." Allen said the May 19 primaries will proceed as scheduled and his office will remain in close contact with the governor's office "as this situation continues developing."

The change would give Republicans a chance to reclaim the district now represented by Rep. Shomari Figures, a Democrat. Figures was elected in 2024 under the court-ordered map. His election gave the state — where Black residents comprise more than one quarter of the population — two Black representatives in its congressional delegation for the first time in history.

Figures called the Supreme Court action an "incredibly unfortunate decision" that "sets the stage for Alabama to go back to the 1950s and '60s in terms of Black political representation in the state."

Alabama is one of several states trying to change their congressional district boundaries before the November elections as part of a nationwide redistricting battle being won, so far, by Republicans.

Voting districts typically are redrawn once a decade, immediately after a census, to account for population changes. But President Donald Trump urged Texas Republicans last year to redraw congressional districts to their advantage in a bid to hold onto a narrow House majority in the midterm elections.

Democrats in California countered with their own redistricting. And numerous Republican-led states have followed. The high court's Louisiana ruling provided fuel for Republicans to intensify their redistricting efforts.

So far, Republicans think they could win as many as 14 additional seats in the November elections from new districts enacted in Texas, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida and Tennessee. Democrats think they could win up to six additional seats from new districts in California and Utah. But Democrats suffered a major setback when the Virginia Supreme Court overturned a voter-approved redistricting amendment that could have yielded four more seats for the party.

Trump nominates Cameron Hamilton, fired after defending FEMA, to lead the agency

By GABRIELA AOUN ANGUIRA Associated Press

President Donald Trump nominated Cameron Hamilton Monday to lead the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a notable comeback for the former Navy SEAL who was fired from his role as FEMA's temporary leader last year after he defended its existence.

His nomination comes as the Trump administration has increasingly signaled it is backing away from promises to dismantle FEMA, an agency that has faced withering criticism by the president. The nomination of Hamilton, who argued abolishing FEMA was not in the country's best interests, is the latest indication of that change.

If confirmed, Hamilton would be the principal adviser to Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin on emergency management and FEMA's first permanent administrator in Trump's second term. The agency has gone through three temporary leaders, including Hamilton's brief tenure from January to May 2025.

He would take over an embattled agency still reeling from Kristi Noem's turbulent leadership of the Department of Homeland Security, of which FEMA is part. FEMA's workforce has been worn down by mass staff departures, policies that hamstrung operations and a 75-day-long DHS shutdown that ended April 30.

Hamilton will need to ensure the agency is prepared for summer disaster season, just weeks away, while answering to Trump, who is likely to expect major reforms after a council he appointed recommended sweeping changes last Friday.

"Now is the opportunity to stabilize FEMA," said Michael Coen, the agency's chief of staff in the Obama and Biden administrations.

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Fired after defending FEMA

Hamilton, who had never been a state or local emergency management director and who had publicly criticized FEMA in the past, was a controversial choice when Trump named him temporary leader in January 2025, just days before the president floated the idea of "getting rid" of FEMA.

His rupture with DHS officials began as he defended a federal role in supporting disaster-impacted states, tribes and territories.

"Once the conversation shifted to, 'Now we're going to abolish,' I immediately expressed concern," he said last September on the "Disaster Tough" podcast with John Scardena, a former FEMA incident management team leader.

DHS officials even subjected him to a polygraph test, accusing him and other officials of leaking details of a private meeting. He passed, but said he knew his dismissal was inevitable.

At a May 7 appearance before a House Appropriations subcommittee, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, a Connecticut Democrat, asked Hamilton if he believed FEMA should be abolished.

"I do not believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency," he replied. The next day, he was fired.

Hamilton will have to rebuild trust

Defending FEMA despite knowing it would likely cost him his job garnered respect and trust among people whose job it is to lead communities through crisis, said Scardena, now president of the consultancy Doberman Emergency Management Group, which trains emergency managers.

"He won myself over and I think a lot of people by what he did," Scardena said.

But multiple current FEMA employees who requested anonymity for fear of retribution for speaking publicly told The Associated Press they had concerns over some of the actions taken under Hamilton.

In 2024, Hamilton shared posts on X promoting misinformation about FEMA spending during Hurricane Helene.

During his temporary leadership, FEMA ceased door-to-door canvassing to reach survivors after disasters, and canceled a multibillion-dollar resilience grant program, since restored by a federal judge. The Department of Government Efficiency gained access to internal FEMA networks containing survivors' private information. FEMA staff were fired for fulfilling a reimbursement payment to New York City for housing undocumented immigrants as part of FEMA's Shelter and Services program.

Hamilton has said he believes FEMA needs major reform. He has said that he wants FEMA to move faster, that the agency is saddled with responsibilities he sees as outside its remit, and that some states have become too dependent on the agency. A Trump-appointed council last week urged sweeping changes to FEMA, which would require congressional action.

"I think he's going to need to rebuild trust across the agency," said Deanne Criswell, FEMA administrator under former President Joe Biden, adding that she believes Hamilton cares about FEMA and she appreciated his outreach to emergency management directors and former officials during and after his tenure.

Senate confirmation process could raise questions of experience

Hamilton could face pushback in the Senate confirmation process over never having led an emergency management agency, a common stepping stone to becoming administrator of an agency with over 21,000 employees.

Federal law requires the FEMA administrator to have "a demonstrated ability in and knowledge of emergency management and homeland security" and at least five years of "executive leadership and management experience."

Hamilton trained as a Navy hospital corpsman before spending a decade as a Navy SEAL on SEAL Team Eight. He then became a U.S. State Department emergency management specialist handling overseas crisis response, then directed emergency medical services at DHS.

Democrats ask the Supreme Court to halt a Virginia ruling blocking new congressional districts

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats on Monday filed an emergency appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to halt a Virginia ruling invalidating a ballot measure that would have given their party an additional four winnable U.S. House seats.

The move came after the Virginia Supreme Court on Friday struck down a constitutional amendment that voters narrowly passed just last month. The 4-3 state court decision found that the Democratic-controlled legislature improperly began the process of placing the amendment on the ballot after early voting had begun in the Virginia's general election last fall.

Democrats argued unsuccessfully that the U.S. Supreme Court has held that, even if early voting is underway, an election does not happen until Election Day itself.

The appeal is the latest twist in the nation's mid-decade redistricting competition. It was kicked off last year by President Donald Trump urging Republican-controlled states to redraw their lines and was supercharged by a recent Supreme Court ruling severely weakening the Voting Rights Act.

"The Court overrode the will of the people who ratified the amendment by ordering the Commonwealth to conduct its election with the congressional districts that the people rejected," wrote lawyers for Virginia Democrats and the state's Democratic Attorney General, Jay Jones. They added, "The irreparable harm resulting from the Supreme Court of Virginia's decision is profound and immediate."

The filing is a sign of Democratic desperation after the Virginia decision deprived them of four winnable House seats in the mid-decade redistricting race that President Donald Trump kicked off last year. Democrats are still favorites to recapture the House of Representatives, but their GOP rivals have claimed to have gained more than a dozen seats through redistricting. The voter-approved Virginia map would have partly offset that.

Democrats are taking a legal long shot in asking the justices to reverse the Virginia court's ruling. The 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.

Politically, the appeal could help a party struggling to compete with Republicans in the unusual mid-decade redrawing of congressional boundaries by providing fodder for election-year messaging about a partisan Supreme Court. The court recently allowed Louisiana Republicans to proceed with redistricting after the justices struck down a majority Black district as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander.

Democrats have been set on their heels because, days after the Virginia ballot measure passed, the Supreme Court's conservatives reversed decades of rulings and effectively neutered the Voting Rights Act, paving the way for Southern states to eliminate some majority Black districts and further pad Republican margins in Congress.

The Virginia amendment had been launched long before that ruling. It was intended as a response to Republican gains in Texas, Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio, and to blunt a new map in Florida that just became law. Once the Virginia amendment passed, it briefly turned the nationwide redistricting scramble into a draw between the two parties.

That was unraveled by the Virginia Supreme Court's decision. The justices are appointed by the legislature, which has flipped between the two parties in recent decades, and the body is generally not seen as having a clear ideological bent.

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Oil prices rise as the Iran war drags on, but US stocks inch to more records

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices rose Monday as the war with Iran threatens to drag on for longer, but the U.S. stock market nevertheless inched toward more records.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil climbed 2.9% to settle at \$104.21 after President Donald Trump said the U.S.-Iran ceasefire was on “life support” after he rejected Iran’s latest proposal to end their war. The rejection raises the stakes for Trump’s trip this week to China, where he could urge President Xi Jinping to pressure Iran into making concessions. Xi has influence because China is the biggest buyer of Iran’s sanctioned crude oil.

The war has already sent the price for a barrel of Brent up from roughly \$70 and delivered a blast of painful inflation through the global economy. That’s because it has shut the Strait of Hormuz and kept oil tankers stuck in the Persian Gulf instead of delivering crude to customers worldwide.

Still, the U.S. stock market has set a run of records on hopes that the war will not keep oil prices high for very long. Companies are meanwhile producing bigger profits than analysts expected, while signals suggest the U.S. economy is holding up even though households are feeling discouraged by expensive gasoline and tariffs.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 rose 0.2% from its prior all-time high set on Friday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 95 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.1% to reach its own all-time high.

The majority of stocks within the S&P 500 fell, even though the overall index rose. Among them was Mosaic, which reported much weaker results for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

The fertilizer company is benefiting from higher prices for its products, but it’s also contending with much higher prices for sulfur and other raw materials because of logistics snarls created by the war with Iran. Mosaic’s stock fell 1.8%.

Stocks of companies whose customers have the least cushion to absorb higher gasoline prices also struggled, and Dollar General fell 7.6%. Businesses with big fuel bills likewise had sharp losses, including drops of 4.3% for Royal Caribbean and 3.2% for Southwest Airlines.

Helping to offset that was Fox, which climbed 7.6% after reporting stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

More than four out of every five companies in the S&P 500 that have reported their results for the latest quarter so far have topped profit expectations, and they’re on track to deliver overall growth of nearly 28%, according to FactSet. If that turns out to be the case, it would be the best growth since the end of 2021.

It’s not just U.S. companies muscling past analysts’ profit expectations. Globally, companies are on track for their strongest growth in more than four years, according to Deutsche Bank strategists led by Binky Chadha. The boom in artificial-intelligence technology has helped corporate profits rise at a faster rate than overall economies.

Outside of earnings reports, Beazer Homes USA soared 34% after Dream Finders Homes offered to buy it in a deal valued at roughly \$704 million. A combination would create the country’s seventh-largest homebuilder, and Dream Finders is asking Beazer’s shareholders to push its management and board to OK the deal after making several attempts itself.

Dream Finders rose 5%.

Tech stocks were also strong, continuing their big run amid the AI boom. Gains of 2% for Nvidia and 6.5% for Micron Technology were the strongest forces pushing the S&P 500 upward.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 13.91 points to 7,412.84. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 95.31 to 49,704.47, and the Nasdaq composite gained 27.05 to 26,274.13.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed across Europe and Asia. France’s CAC 40 fell 0.7% for one of the world’s bigger losses, while South Korea’s Kospi soared 4.3% thanks to gains for Samsung Electronics, SK Hynix and other tech stocks benefiting from AI.

In the bond market, Treasury yields ticked higher. The 10-year yield rose to 4.40% from 4.38% late Friday.

Yields had moderated a bit this month, but they remain well above where they were before the war with Iran began. Higher yields can raise rates for mortgages and other kinds of loans going to U.S. households and businesses, which in turn can slow the economy. Higher yields also tend to push downward on prices for stocks and other kinds of investments.

A report on Monday said the pace of sales for previously occupied U.S. homes was weaker last month than economists expected.

Supreme Court temporarily extends women's access to a widely used abortion pill

By MARK SHERMAN, GEOFF MULVIHILL and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is leaving women's access to a widely used abortion pill untouched until at least Thursday, while the justices consider whether to allow restrictions on the drug, mifepristone, to take effect.

Justice Samuel Alito's order Monday allows women seeking abortions to continue obtaining the pill at pharmacies or through the mail, without an in-person visit to a doctor. It prevents restrictions on mifepristone imposed by a federal appeals court from taking effect for the time being.

The court is dealing with its latest abortion controversy four years after its conservative majority overturned *Roe v. Wade* and allowed more than a dozen states to effectively ban abortion outright.

The case before the court stems from a lawsuit Louisiana filed to roll back the Food and Drug Administration's rules on how mifepristone can be prescribed. The state claims the policy undermines the ban there, and it questions the safety of the drug, which was first approved in 2000 and has repeatedly been deemed safe and effective by FDA scientists.

Lower courts concluded that Louisiana is likely to prevail, and a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that mail access and telehealth visits should be suspended while the case plays out.

The drug is most often used for abortion in combination with another drug, misoprostol. Medication abortions accounted for nearly two-thirds of all abortions in the U.S. in 2023, the last year for which statistics are available.

The current dispute is similar to one that reached the court three years ago.

Lower courts then also sought to restrict access to mifepristone, in a case brought by physicians who oppose abortion. They filed suit in the months after the court overturned *Roe*.

The Supreme Court blocked the 5th Circuit ruling from taking effect over the dissenting votes of Alito and Justice Clarence Thomas. Then, in 2024, the high court unanimously dismissed the doctors' suit, reasoning they did not have the legal right, or standing, to sue.

In the current dispute, mainstream medical groups, the pharmaceutical industry and Democratic members of Congress have weighed in cautioning the court against limiting access to the drug. Pharmaceutical companies said a ruling for abortion opponents would upend the drug approval process.

The FDA has eased a number of restrictions initially placed on the drug, including who can prescribe it, how it is dispensed and what kinds of safety complications must be reported.

Despite those determinations, abortion opponents have been challenging the safety of mifepristone for more than 25 years. They have filed a series of petitions and lawsuits against the agency, generally alleging that it violated federal law by overlooking safety issues with the pill.

President Donald Trump's administration has been unusually quiet at the Supreme Court. It declined to file a written brief recommending what the court should do, even though federal regulations are at issue.

The case puts Trump's Republican administration in a difficult place. Trump has relied on the political support of anti-abortion groups but has also seen ballot question and poll results that show Americans generally support abortion rights.

Both sides took the silence as an implicit endorsement of the appellate ruling. Alito is both the justice in charge of handling emergency appeals from Louisiana and the author of the 2022 decision that declared abortion is not a constitutional right and returned the issue to the states.

Man charged in White House correspondents' dinner attack pleads not guilty

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man accused of storming the White House Correspondents' Association dinner while armed with guns and knives pleaded not guilty on Monday to charges that he attempted to kill President Donald Trump and fired a shotgun at a Secret Service officer who tried to stop the attack.

Cole Tomas Allen was handcuffed and shackled and wearing an orange jail uniform when he appeared in federal court for his arraignment. Allen didn't speak during the brief hearing. One of his attorneys entered the plea on his behalf.

Allen's lawyers are asking U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden to disqualify at least two top Justice Department officials from direct involvement in prosecuting him because they could be considered victims or witnesses in the case, creating a potential conflict of interest.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche and U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro were attending the event when Allen ran through a security checkpoint and fired a shotgun at a Secret Service officer, authorities said. In a court filing last week, Allen's attorneys argued that it creates at least the appearance of a conflict of interest for Blanche and Pirro to be making any prosecutorial decisions in the case.

McFadden, a Trump nominee, didn't rule from the bench on that question but asked Allen's attorneys to elaborate on the possible scope of their recusal request. Defense attorney Eugene Ohm said the defense likely would seek to disqualify Pirro's entire office from involvement in the case. Ohm acknowledged that a bid to disqualify the entire Justice Department would be unlikely.

"That would be quite a request," the judge said.

McFadden gave prosecutors until May 22 to respond in writing to the defense's request. The judge asked the government to specify whether it believes Pirro and Blanche could be considered victims in the case.

"That might add some clarity here," McFadden said.

In their filing, Allen's attorneys suggested that the appointment of a special prosecutor might be warranted.

Allen is scheduled to return to court on June 29.

A Secret Service officer was shot once in a bullet-resistant vest during the April 25 attack at the Washington Hilton hotel, which disrupted and ultimately prompted an early end to one of the highest-profile annual events in the nation's capital. The officer fired five shots but didn't hit anybody, authorities said.

Allen, 31, of Torrance, California, was injured but was not shot.

Besides the attempted-assassination count, Allen also is charged with assaulting a federal officer with a deadly weapon and two additional firearms counts. He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison if convicted of the attempted assassination charge alone.

Allen was placed on suicide watch after his arrest, but jail officials removed him from that status after several days. Allen's attorneys complained that he had been unnecessarily confined in a padded room with constant lighting, repeatedly strip searched and placed in restraints outside his cell.

Allen told FBI agents that he didn't expect to survive the attack, which could help explain why he was deemed to be a possible suicide risk, a Justice Department prosecutor has said.

Allen was outfitted with an ammunition bag, a shoulder gun holster and a sheathed knife when he took a photo of himself in his room at the hotel just minutes before the attack, according to prosecutors. In a message that authorities say sheds light on his motive, Allen referred to himself as a "Friendly Federal Assassin" and alluded obliquely to grievances over a range of actions by Trump's Republican administration.

Authorities have alleged that Allen on April 6 reserved a room for himself at the Hilton where the event would be held weeks later under its typical tight security. He traveled by train cross-country from California, checking himself into the hotel a day before the dinner with a room reserved for the weekend.

Trump was rushed off the stage by his security team at the Saturday night event and appeared at the White House two hours later, still in his tuxedo, to talk about the attack and the suspect.

"When you're impactful, they go after you. When you're not impactful, they leave you alone," the presi-

dent said. "They seem to think he was a lone wolf."

Lawsuit blames ChatGPT maker OpenAI for helping plan a school shooting

By JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

The widow of a man killed in last year's mass shooting at Florida State University is suing ChatGPT maker OpenAI, blaming the company's artificial intelligence chatbot for giving advice on how to carry out the rampage.

The lawsuit comes after state authorities disclosed that ChatGPT gave information to the shooter about what time and location would maximize victims on campus, as well as the type of gun and ammunition to use. Authorities say he was also told that an attack can get more media attention if children are involved.

"OpenAI knew this would happen. It's happened before and it was only a matter of time before it happened again," Vandana Joshi, whose husband Tiru Chabba was one of two people killed, said in a statement Monday. Six people were also wounded.

The lawsuit, filed Sunday in federal court, says OpenAI should have built ChatGPT with guardrails to let someone know that police may need to investigate "to prevent a specific plan for imminent harm to the public."

OpenAI has denied any wrongdoing in what it called a "terrible crime."

"In this case, ChatGPT provided factual responses to questions with information that could be found broadly across public sources on the internet, and it did not encourage or promote illegal or harmful activity," Drew Pusateri, a spokesman for the company, said in an email to The Associated Press.

Separately, in April, Florida's attorney general said there was a rare criminal investigation into ChatGPT over whether the AI tool offered advice to Phoenix Ikner that enabled the April 2025 shooting in Tallahassee. The 21-year-old has pleaded not guilty to two counts of first-degree murder and several counts of attempted murder. Prosecutors intend to seek the death penalty.

Investigators said Ikner, a Florida State student, was on campus for an hour before he walked in and out of campus buildings and green spaces while firing a handgun. The shooting took place on a weekday just before lunchtime near the school's Student Union, which has food and shops. The lawsuit says Ikner asked ChatGPT about the busiest times there.

Joshi's husband, a 45-year-old father of two from Greenville, South Carolina, was a regional vice president of the food service vendor Aramark Collegiate Hospitality. The other man who was killed, Robert Morales, 57, was a campus dining coordinator at Florida State.

OpenAI "put their profits over our safety and it killed my husband. They need to be responsible before another family has to go through this," Joshi said in a statement released by her lawyer.

OpenAI is currently valued at \$852 billion.

Several lawsuits have sought damages from AI and tech companies over the influence of chatbots and social media on loved ones' mental health.

In March, a jury in Los Angeles found both Meta and YouTube liable for harms to children using their services. In New Mexico, a jury determined that Meta knowingly harmed children's mental health and concealed what it knew about child sexual exploitation on its platforms.

Trump-Xi summit comes with high stakes for Taiwan, the island democracy that China claims as its own

By AAMER MADHANI and SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump, in his return to the White House, has demonstrated greater ambivalence toward Taiwan, an approach that's raising questions ahead of this week's summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping about whether the U.S. leader could be open to dialing back support for the island democracy that Beijing views as its breakaway province.

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Trump in December authorized an \$11 billion arms package for Taiwan — the largest weapons sale ever to the island — but has not yet moved forward with delivery and even acknowledged that he's discussed the sale with Xi. He's groused that Taiwan "stole" America's semiconductor business and called on Taiwan to pay the U.S. for protection.

All the while, Trump has, with the threat of hefty tariffs, prodded Taipei to agree to massive investments in U.S. semiconductor manufacturing and to purchase billions of dollars' worth of U.S. liquefied natural gas and crude oil.

The president during an Oval Office exchange with reporters on Monday said that he expected Xi would ask him to hold back on arming Taiwan.

"I'm going to have that discussion with President Xi," Trump said about China's strong opposition to the U.S. providing weapons to Taiwan. "President Xi would like us not to, and I'll have that discussion."

Trump's rhetoric is fueling speculation in Beijing, Taipei and Washington about America's commitment to help the island defend itself and whether the Republican president could be persuaded to cede ground on the long-standing U.S. posture toward the island.

Taiwan's backers are concerned that Taipei will be "on the menu" when Trump and Xi sit down for talks, said retired U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery.

"I do worry that we have a transactional president and a transactional opportunity could arise, and then we would have a challenge," said Montgomery, now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank that supports robust U.S. backing of Taiwan.

Rubio says US policy is unchanged

The Chinese have signaled they intend to make Taiwan a central part of the talks. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi raised Taiwan during a call with Secretary of State Marco Rubio to prepare for the trip, and urged the United States to "make the right choices" about its policies toward the island in order to safeguard "stability" between the two nations, according to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

But Rubio said U.S. policy has not changed. "We don't want to see any forced or compelled change in the situation," he told reporters in Rome on Friday, saying it "would be destabilizing to the world." He noted that Taiwan would not be "a feature of our trip, but it'll certainly be an item that's discussed."

White House officials have underscored that Trump, who also approved \$330 million in aircraft parts for Taiwan's military in November, has already approved more in military sales for Taiwan in the first year of his second term than the roughly \$8.4 billion that Democratic President Joe Biden approved over his four years in office.

Taiwan has been under pressure from the Trump administration to increase its defense spending, and on Friday its lawmakers broke months of gridlock to approve \$25 billion in arms purchases. It was significantly less than the \$40 billion proposal put forward last year by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te. A senior Trump administration official, who spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said it was disappointing that the parliament did not fully fund Lai's proposal.

Taiwanese government officials have expressed concern about China's rhetoric ahead of the summit, though they've also taken some comfort from Rubio's measured comments.

"(China) may attempt some maneuvering during the talks, but the U.S. has repeatedly reiterated, through both public and private channels, that its policy toward Taiwan remains unchanged," National Security Bureau Director-General Tsai Ming-yen told reporters.

Xi may look to loosen US-Taiwan ties

The key question, China experts say, is just how far Xi will try to go in his effort to prod Trump closer to Beijing's view.

China sees the self-ruled Taiwan as a renegade province, to be annexed by force if necessary. It prohibits countries it has diplomatic relations with from having formal ties with Taipei. Since establishing diplomatic relations with modern China in 1979, the U.S. has managed to stay within the framework of Beijing's demands while maintaining informal support for Taiwan and providing it with arms.

As part of the U.S. ambiguity on Taiwan, Washington acknowledges Beijing's position that Taiwan is

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part of China but does not explicitly endorse it. The U.S. has also historically stated it “does not support” Taiwan’s independence and opposes unilateral changes to the status quo between Taiwan and China.

But analysts say Xi could seek to persuade Trump — who already has demonstrated a willingness to blur the lines of traditional diplomacy — to loosen ties with Taiwan through curbs on U.S. arms sales or with informal limits on visits by prominent U.S. officials to the island. In February, Trump suggested he broke from longstanding U.S. policy and consulted with Xi on arms sales to Taiwan.

“Even if we don’t see something as dramatic as a formal shift in declaratory policy, this time around, there is always a risk that President Trump may make an off-the-cuff remark given he’s not necessarily somebody who appreciates the nuances of longstanding policy language,” said Patricia Kim of the Assessing China Project at Brookings Institution in Washington.

White House sits out Japan-China rift

A row between U.S. ally Japan and China has also raised speculation about the strength of Trump’s commitment to Taiwan. In November, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said a Chinese attack on Taiwan was of concern to the region and could constitute “a survival-threatening situation” for Japan, requiring the use of force.

Trump made back-to-back calls with Takaichi and Xi that same month, though he’s remained largely silent about the spat.

“I know they have a little bit of an edgy relationship,” Trump said as he hosted Takaichi for talks in March.

Additionally, Trump’s backing of Taiwan faced scrutiny after the 2026 U.S. National Defense Strategy omitted direct mention of the island.

The best-case scenario for Taiwan

One card Taiwan holds is its robust semiconductor sector, the world’s largest, which the U.S. relies on to maintain an edge in its advanced-technology race against China.

“Trump at the very least realizes the role that Taiwan plays in the U.S.’s economic growth,” said Lev Nachman, a political science professor at National Taiwan University. “So I think that is sort of the main silver lining in thinking that nothing drastic will change in terms of policy toward Taiwan.”

While Trump is known for his transactional nature, his administration has not viewed difficult aspects of the U.S.-China relationship as “fungible” issues that can be traded, said Edgard Kagan, a former senior State Department official who served under Trump and Biden on East Asia policy issues.

“The president understands leverage. My experience of being in meetings with him, he has a very, very acute sense of how to use it,” said Kagan, who is now the China Studies chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. “And so I think that the idea that there’s going to be a trade where the president sort of sacrifices U.S. interests in Taiwan in order to get other things — I think it’s unlikely based on my own experience of how he operates.”

In the end, whether the island comes out of the Xi-Trump summit on a stronger or weaker footing will likely be judged by the leaders’ public statements.

Trump on Monday reiterated that he’s confident that Xi won’t take military action against Taiwan under his watch.

“I think the best-case scenario Taiwan can hope for is that Taiwan is not talked about publicly or, at the very least, in a minimal way,” Nachman said.

New Beatles fan experience set to open in London in 2027

LONDON (AP) — The Beatles are headed back to one of the band’s most famous sites with a new fan experience in London.

Apple Corps Ltd, the company founded by the Fab Four, announced Monday that it will open a new seven-floor fan experience at the company’s early headquarters. The building is the place where the band’s “Let It Be” album was recorded and its rooftop was the site of the Beatles’ last public performance on Jan. 30, 1969.

The attraction in central London will allow fans access to the rooftop, studios and extensive Beatles

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archives.

"It was such a trip to get back to 3 Savile Row recently and have a look around. There are so many special memories within the walls, not to mention the rooftop. The team have put together some really impressive plans and I'm excited for people to see it when it's ready," Paul McCartney said in a statement announcing the attraction.

"Wow, it's like coming home," Ringo Starr said in a statement.

An opening date for the attraction has not yet been announced.

Interest in the Beatles remains high, with four biopics in production. Peter Jackson's 2021 documentary series, "The Beatles: Get Back," relied heavily on footage filmed during the "Let It Be" recording sessions and of the farewell rooftop performance.

In 2023, artificial intelligence helped create the final Beatles recording, the song "Now and Then," which relied on recordings by the original Beatles.

Trump says Iran ceasefire is on 'life support' and proposes gas tax pause as strait stays closed

By JON GAMBRELL, SAMY MAGDY and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said the Iran ceasefire is on "life support" after rejecting Tehran's latest proposal, which officials said included some nuclear concessions. Trump also proposed suspending the federal gas tax to help with higher fuel prices caused by the war.

The stalled diplomacy and recent exchanges of fire could tip the Middle East back into open warfare and prolong the worldwide energy crisis sparked by the conflict. Iran still has a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for global oil and gas shipments, and America is blockading Iranian ports.

Asked at the White House if the ceasefire was still in effect, Trump said it's on "life support."

"I would call it the weakest right now after reading that piece of garbage they sent us," Trump added. "I didn't even finish reading it."

Trump also said he supported a suspension of the federal tax on gasoline — just over 18 cents per gallon and 24 cents for diesel. Congress, which is controlled by Republicans, would have to approve. The tax brings in more than \$23 billion each year.

His pledge came after fuel prices surged past \$4.50 a gallon last week. Trump predicted that the price of oil and gas would drop "like a rock" as soon as hostilities are over.

The two sides remain far apart

Trump has demanded a major rollback of Iran's nuclear activities, while Iran is pushing for a more limited agreement that would reopen the strait and lift the blockade ahead of further negotiations.

On Monday, Trump claimed that Iran had said it would allow the U.S. to come in and help extract its highly enriched uranium but went back on that in its latest ceasefire proposal. "They changed their mind because they didn't put it in the paper," he said.

Iran has not publicly agreed to give up its uranium, saying it has a right to enrich and that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful.

Two regional officials told The Associated Press that Iran has offered to dilute part of its highly enriched uranium and transport the rest to a third country. Russia has previously offered to take it. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomacy.

Trump is expected to use a trip this week to China to urge President Xi Jinping to pressure Iran. Beijing is the biggest buyer of Iran's sanctioned crude oil, giving it leverage.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who launched the war with Trump on Feb. 28, has also demanded that all of Iran's highly enriched uranium be removed from the country.

He told CBS' "60 Minutes" in an interview that aired Sunday that if that can't be accomplished with negotiations, Israel and the U.S. agree "we can reengage them militarily."

Iran's proposal included far-reaching demands

Iran's proposal asked that the U.S. recognize its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, formalizing its

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control over the international waterway. Iran has effectively closed the strait since the start of the war, allowing only a small number of ships to pass and charging tolls.

But experts say such an arrangement would likely violate international law that provides for freedom of navigation. That proposal is also likely to be widely rejected by the international community. The strait was open to international traffic before the war.

Iran is also demanding war reparations from the U.S., the lifting of international sanctions, the unfreezing of Iranian assets held abroad and an end to the war between Israel and Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah, according to Iranian state TV.

Israel and Hezbollah have continued to exchange blows, mainly in southern Lebanon, since a nominal ceasefire took hold last month.

"We did not demand any concessions — the only thing we demanded was Iran's legitimate rights," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Monday. "The American side still insists on its one-sided views and unreasonable demands."

Pakistan still trying to negotiate a deal

Two regional diplomats familiar with the ongoing talks said that Pakistan was continuing its efforts to broker a compromise.

One of the diplomats said Pakistan was trying to arrange a memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the war and paving the way for a broader dialogue on issues where the two sides remain divided.

Pakistan had hoped to help finalize the memorandum last week, but the effort did not materialize, and mediators are still working on various proposals, the diplomat said.

The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the behind-the-scenes diplomacy, added that Islamabad is receiving support from other regional countries in its peace efforts.

Iran keeps up its executions

Meanwhile, Iran executed another man it accused of spying for both the CIA and Israel's Mossad intelligence service. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency said Erfan Shakourzadeh had worked on satellite communications and relayed classified information to those intelligence services.

Iran has carried out a string of executions since nationwide protests swept the country in January. Activist groups have long accused Iran of carrying out closed-door trials during which defendants are unable to fully defend themselves. Iran's judiciary chief has repeatedly said that Tehran would increase the speed with which it carried out hangings to fight back against its enemies at home and abroad.

What to know about hantavirus, the illness linked to a cruise ship outbreak

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — An outbreak aboard a cruise ship of a rare rodent-borne illness called hantavirus has left three passengers dead and sickened others, 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."

Hantaviruses have been around for centuries and are thought to exist around the world. 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.

The virus usually spreads when people inhale contaminated residue of rodent droppings. But the hantavirus that has caused the current outbreak, called the Andes virus, may be able to spread between people in rare cases. Because of this, health officials are taking extra precautions with passengers returning to their home countries.

COVID-19 spreads much more easily than hantavirus, sometimes even from people who are symptom-free — which made the virus extremely difficult to contain when the pandemic broke out in 2020. Hantavirus

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is harder to get, though potentially more dangerous once someone is sick.

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 Ushuaia, at the country's southern tip, two officials told AP. But officials in Ushuaia note that the virus has not previously been detected in the province.

Argentina has seen a surge of hantavirus cases that many local public health researchers attribute to climate change.

The virus is spread by rodents and, more rarely, people

Hantavirus is mainly spread by contact with rodents or their urine, saliva or droppings, particularly when the material is disturbed and becomes airborne, posing a risk of inhalation.

People are typically exposed to hantavirus around their homes, cabins or sheds, especially when cleaning enclosed spaces with little ventilation or exploring areas with mouse droppings.

Scientists are still trying to learn exactly how the Andes virus may be able to spread between people, said Dr. Jeanne Marrazzo, chief executive officer of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. They suspect people could be infectious when they have symptoms, and, if the virus spreads, it may be transmitted through small liquid particles that blow out of an infected person when they talk, cough or sneeze.

The illness starts with flu-like symptoms

An infection can rapidly progress and become life-threatening. Experts say it can start with symptoms including fever, chills, muscle aches and maybe a headache — much like the flu.

Symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome usually show between one and eight weeks after contact with an infected rodent. As the infection progresses, patients might experience tightness in the chest, as the lungs fill with fluid.

The other syndrome caused by hantavirus — known as hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome, which can cause bleeding, high fever, and kidney failure — usually develops within a week or two after exposure.

Death rates vary by which hantavirus causes the illness. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is fatal in about 35% of people infected, while the death rate for hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome varies from 1% to 15% of patients, according to the CDC.

Infections have been relatively 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.

The Andes virus is a concerning member of the hantavirus family

The family of hantaviruses is named for the Hantaan River in Korea, where the first one was discovered.

That virus, called the Hantaan virus, infected 3,000 soldiers during the Korean War in the 1950s, causing a disease called Korean hemorrhagic fever. It killed 190 of them. The virus itself was not identified until more than 20 years later.

Hantaviruses have not been found to spread from person to person — with the possible exception of the Andes virus, which has been confirmed in the current outbreak.

Still, transmission between people does not happen easily, and would require "close and prolonged" contact, according to the WHO.

"We haven't had huge person-to-person spreads of hantavirus infection ever before, and there's no rea-

son to suspect a huge outbreak from this case at this point," said Steven Bradfute, an associate professor and associate director of the Center for Global Health at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, which specializes in hantavirus research.

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 it 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," Bradfute said. "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."

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.

Philippine vice president impeached by lawmakers over suspected wealth and threats

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The House of Representatives in the Philippines voted overwhelmingly to impeach Vice President Sara Duterte on Monday over alleged unexplained wealth and threats against the president, as the rift between the camps of the country's top two officials escalated.

The House, which is dominated by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s allies, voted 257-25 with nine abstentions. The two impeachment complaints against Duterte, which will now be elevated to the Senate for a trial, mark an initial setback to her plan to seek the presidency in 2028.

Shortly before the impeachment vote in the House, Senate President Vicente Sotto III, who had vowed to immediately put the vice president to trial, was ousted by 13 of 24 senators, including supporters of the vice president and her father, former President Rodrigo Duterte.

It's not immediately clear how the vice president's impending impeachment trial would be affected by the Senate leadership change, but Sotto told reporters that he and his allies would insist that the proceedings against the vice president should be immediately taken up once submitted.

A standoff in the Senate

A tense standoff ensued when Sen. Roland dela Rosa, an ally of former President Duterte — who is facing trial before the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands — suddenly appeared in the Senate after months of absence. National Bureau of Investigation officers tried to run after dela Rosa but failed to reach him as he dashed into the Senate's plenary hall and sought the protection of fellow senators.

Rodrigo Duterte was arrested in March last year and detained in the Netherlands on charges of crimes against humanity. The charges are in connection with deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he ordered while he was in office.

Dela Rosa once served as the national police chief under Duterte, and was the first to enforce the bloody campaign against illegal drugs that left thousands of mostly petty suspects dead. Philippine police officials have summoned dela Rosa to appear before them for an investigation into his role in the Duterte-era killings.

In The Hague, the ICC on Monday unsealed an arrest warrant for dela Rosa for the crime against humanity of murder of "no less than 32 persons" allegedly committed between July 2016 and the end of April 2018, when he headed the national police.

It remains unclear how the warrant would be enforced as dela Rosa remained in the Senate's protective custody.

Duterte had survived an impeachment bid last year

The vice president has generally denied any wrongdoing without answering the criminal allegations

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against her in detail. Her lawyers said Monday they were ready to defend her in a trial.

"While questions of constitutional significance remain pending before the Supreme Court, we are fully prepared to defend the vice president before the Senate," the lawyers said in a statement, adding that "it is incumbent upon the prosecution to discharge the burden of proof."

She has repeatedly accused Marcos, his wife and his cousin, former House Speaker Martin Romualdez, of corruption, weak leadership and attempting to muzzle her because of speculation she may seek the presidency in 2028 when Marcos' six-year term ends.

Last year, she was also impeached by the House but survived by successfully petitioning the Supreme Court to declare the impeachment bid unconstitutional on a technicality.

Rep. Gerville Luistro, who heads the House Justice Committee, said the impeachment complaints included several criminal allegations, like huge bank transactions over the years that Duterte has not declared as required by law and misuse of confidential funds of her office as vice president and as education secretary, a post she once held under Marcos.

Luistro also cited threats made by the vice president during an online news conference in 2024 to have Marcos, his wife and Romualdez killed by an assassin if she herself was assassinated, as their political disputes escalated. The vice president then warned that her threat wasn't a joke.

The vice president later said she wasn't threatening him but was expressing concern for her own safety. Her threatening remarks set off a criminal investigation and national security concerns.

"These are matters that go into the integrity and accountability and fitness of a public official occupying the second highest position in our government," Rep. Leila de Lima, who endorsed one of two impeachment complaints against Duterte, told fellow lawmakers.

"Impeachment is not political persecution," de Lima said in response to allegations by Duterte's followers.

The vice president's husband, Manases Carpio, has filed criminal complaints against Luistro and other legislators and officials after government records of the couple's bank transactions were made public in a recent House hearing. They said that violated the country's bank secrecy law.

The vice president remains popular, based on independent surveys. Sara Duterte and President Marcos were running mates in a whirlwind alliance in the 2022 election but have since had a bitter falling out.

She has accused Marcos of allowing the ICC to carry out what she described as the "kidnapping" of her father in violation of Philippine laws.

Pediatrics group issues new guidance on recess for the first time in 13 years

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

Recess isn't just a fun break for grade schoolers. It's crucial to good health and good grades for kids of all ages.

That's the message from a leading pediatricians group, which just released the first new guidance in 13 years about this unstructured time at school and how it needs to be protected.

The updated policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics comes after years of shrinking recesses and worsening children's health.

The group "has always supported play – free play for kids – but it's been increasingly threatened over time," partly by the drive for higher test scores, said Dr. Robert Murray, a lead author. "It has a very powerful benefit if it's used to the fullest."

The new guidance, published Monday in the journal *Pediatrics*, is similar to the previous policy statement but cites the latest research on why these breaks are essential for kids' academic success and mental, physical, social and emotional growth.

For example, new evidence shows that kids need pauses between concentrated bouts of learning so the brain can hold and store the information. Researchers also say recess gives kids a chance to navigate relationships and build confidence, which is just as important for older kids as younger ones.

Murray and his colleagues also stressed the importance of physical activity in preventing obesity, a

condition that now affects about 1 in 5 U.S. children and teens.

Given these benefits, they recommend that recess be protected and never withheld for academic or punitive reasons, as sometimes happens in schools.

"If the child is disruptive or rude and disrespectful, recess is one of the things that teachers use to punish kids," Murray said, adding that students struggling with behavioral issues or grades are often the ones who need recess most.

But those students aren't the only ones losing out. Recess has been waning for all kids. Since the mid-2000s, up to 40% of school districts nationally have reduced or eliminated recess, according to data from the group Springboard to Active Schools in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Today, the duration of recess varies widely across U.S. schools, ranging from less than 10 minutes to more than an hour a day, the pediatrics group said. Older kids generally get less time than younger ones.

Ideally, studies show, kids should get a minimum of 20 minutes a day and multiple breaks. In other countries such as Denmark, Japan and the United Kingdom, students get breaks after every 45 minutes to 50 minutes of classroom instruction.

"They should get a long enough period of time where they can de-stress and blow off steam and prepare for the next class," Murray said.

Dr. Lauren Fiechtner, a childhood obesity expert at Mass General Brigham for Children in Boston, said she's glad about the updated recess recommendations. She's seen the importance of recess as both a doctor and mother of two. She recalled how her 8-year-old son learned how to play basketball at recess and now loves the game.

Fiechtner, who wasn't involved in creating the guidance, agrees with the recommendation that middle and high school students need recess, too.

"As kids get older, they're more on their screens. So it's really helpful, I think, for outdoor activity and recess to be happening," she said. "Recess is great. We all kind of need recess."

Tulsa Race Massacre reparations is soul-redeeming work for the US, Oklahoma civil rights lawyer says

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It wasn't until his junior year of college that civil rights attorney Damario Solomon-Simmons learned about a devastating massacre that took place in his hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

His African American studies professor lectured about what is known today as the Tulsa Race Massacre — the days in 1921 when white mobs carried out a scorched-earth campaign against an outnumbered Black militia protecting the fabled Black Wall Street, a prosperous all-Black community.

"I actually told a teacher, 'I'm from Tulsa. That's not true,'" Solomon-Simmons recalled. "And of course, I was wrong."

That day planted a seed for the then-aspiring attorney, who went on to lead a reparations campaign for the living survivors of the massacre and their descendants. Nearly 105 years later, no one has been compensated for what they lost, and none of the culprits have been held accountable.

That fight for reparations is the subject of Solomon-Simmons' first book, "Redeem a Nation: The Century-Long Battle to Restore the Soul of America," which is intended as a blueprint for justice in historic atrocities that Black Americans endured but never received reparations for. The book hits shelves Tuesday.

After the massacre, more than 35 city blocks of the neighborhood known as Greenwood were leveled in fires, an estimated 191 businesses were destroyed, and roughly 11,000 Black residents were displaced. The state of Oklahoma declared the death toll to be only 36 people, although many historians and experts who have studied the event put the death toll between 75 and 300.

Greenwood, founded in 1906, had been a bustling city within a city, with Black-owned grocery stores, soda fountains, cafes, barbershops, a movie theater, music venues, cigar and billiard parlors, tailors and

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dry cleaners, rooming houses and rental properties.

"If you can ignore Greenwood, which was the beacon of Black prosperity and Black progress in the history of this country, then you can ignore Black people in general," Solomon-Simmons recently told The Associated Press. "I think that's why people around the nation are so focused on the work that we're doing, because they understand what it means to all of Black America."

Solomon-Simmons's book comes just months before the United States will mark 250 years since its founding in 1776. That was 89 years before the institution of chattel slavery — meaning an enslaved person was held as legal property of another — was abolished. The civil rights attorney questions the idea that Americans can truly celebrate the country's accomplishments when it has yet to pay reparations, which historians say informs modern day disparities in wealth between Black and white people.

"We cannot talk about what America has been and will be, without making sure that these issues are discussed and we get reparatory justice for both" slavery and the Tulsa massacre, Solomon-Simmons said.

'America has never had a soul'

In 343 pages, Solomon-Simmons does more than recite the history of the massacre or make a legal thriller out of his reparations campaign. For him, securing justice for the survivors and descendants of the massacre is also about healing a nation whose earliest promises of equality for all rang hollow.

"When I speak of repairing America's soul, I do not mean restoring something that was once whole," Solomon-Simmons writes in the book. "America has never had a soul. ... There was no moral center to recover."

He suggests that America's soul cannot be repaired if it is forced to choose between rebuilding the nation or repairing Black America. They must do both, he says.

"The struggle for justice in Greenwood is not about returning to a mythical past. It is about proving whether America can build a soul at all through truth, through justice, through repair."

Reparations for slavery and other historical racial injustices has been debated in the U.S. since Reconstruction, through the Civil Rights Movement and for much of the 21st century. Jennifer L. Morgan, a professor of history at New York University, said such debates are complicated by the question of exactly who pays the reparations and exactly who receives the payment.

"I don't think that we're talking about individuals who owe anybody else reparations. I think we're talking about states, about institutions, about the nation," Morgan said. "America is still grappling with reparations because America is still grappling at the legacy of slavery, racial discrimination, Jim Crow, and violent exclusion of Black people from the body politic."

Some opponents of reparations argue there are no living culprits or direct victims of enslavement, much less people with verifiable claims of harm that can be presented in a court of law.

Solomon-Simmons disagrees.

"We know who did the massacre — the perpetrators are still living in Tulsa," he said referring to the city and the chamber of commerce, which plaintiffs alleged had a hand in obstructing Greenwood's recovery.

There is one remaining massacre survivor involved in the reparations lawsuit: 111-year-old Lessie Benningfield Randle.

"If we cannot get her reparations while she's alive, for the massacre, it's gonna make it that much harder for us to get reparations for enslavement, Jim Crow, redlining and all those things that we are owed," Solomon-Simmons said.

Fight for Tulsa reparations continues

In the book, Solomon-Simmons reflects on what committed him to the reparations fight.

While in law school, he was introduced to high profile civil rights attorneys working for the Reparations Coordinating Committee — the late Harvard Professor Charles Ogletree Jr., who mentored Barack and Michelle Obama; and the late Johnnie Cochran, who is widely known for defending O.J. Simpson during his trial for murder of his ex-wife. Solomon-Simmons became a law clerk for the committee.

After witnessing Ogletree argue a Tulsa reparations case in federal court in 2004, Solomon-Simmons said the practice of law stopped being just a credential for speaking, writing, or teaching. It became a calling.

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In 2020, Solomon-Simmons led a lawsuit on behalf of 11 plaintiffs, including the last three known living survivors of the massacre, against the City of Tulsa and seven defendants. The suit was the first of its kind in state court and the first to get far enough to see a judge. In 2024, the Oklahoma Supreme Court dismissed the lawsuit. In the final days of the Biden administration, the Justice Department released a report saying it had determined there is no longer an avenue for criminal prosecution over the massacre.

But the fight continues, Solomon-Simmons says, for cash payment to Randle and other descendants, as well as the return of land stolen after the massacre and during a period of urban renewal in Tulsa.

In 2025, the city's first Black mayor, Monroe Nichols, endorsed a broad proposal dubbed Project Greenwood, which calls for financially compensating Randle, funding a scholarship program for descendants of victims, and designating June 1 as Tulsa Race Massacre Observance Day.

Solomon-Simmons also runs the nonprofit Justice for Greenwood, which he founded a year before the community marked the centennial of the massacre in 2021.

"One thing I've learned from this work, and as a lawyer in general, is that people want justice," he said. "People want reparations, but people (also) want acknowledgment. They want to be seen. They want people to understand that something happened to them and their family, and they want an apology."

Norwegian court to deliver verdict in rape trial of crown princess's son on June 15

OSLO, Norway (AP) — A Norwegian court said Monday that it will announce its verdict next month in the trial of the eldest son of Norway's crown princess on charges including rape, following proceedings that cast a shadow over the royal family.

The Oslo District Court said that the verdict in the case of Marius Borg Høyby will be delivered on June 15. During six weeks of court proceedings that ended on March 19, prosecutors sought a prison sentence of seven years and seven months for Høyby, who denies the rape allegations.

Høyby, 29, is the son of Crown Princess Mette-Marit by a previous relationship and the stepson of Crown Prince Haakon, the heir to Norway's throne. He is charged with 40 offenses in total, including four counts of rape between 2018 and 2024.

Defense lawyers for Høyby, who has no royal titles or official duties, said that there was no evidence to support the rape charges. He has, however, admitted to lesser offenses, including drug possession, transporting 3.5 kilograms (7.7 pounds) of marijuana in 2020, traffic violations and breaches of a restraining order involving a former partner. He has also partially admitted to acts related to violence and threats but disputes key aspects of those allegations, including intent.

The defense team has said that a maximum sentence of 18 months would be appropriate for the charges he has admitted to. It argued that Høyby has lived under extraordinary media pressure due to his royal connections, which they said has shaped public perception of the case.

While the trial has played out, Mette-Marit separately has faced scrutiny this year over her connections with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. That has raised questions over her judgment, though she is not accused of any wrongdoing.

Older Americans say it's a good time to find a job. Younger people aren't buying it, new poll finds

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

For years, younger Americans have been more optimistic about the job market than older Americans, even through the depths of the Great Recession. But in an abrupt shift, a new poll released Monday finds young people's confidence has plummeted over the past two years — while their elders remain more upbeat.

The gap between young and older Americans' views of the job market now is greater than in any other country among the 141 surveyed, according to the Gallup World Poll. In the United States, 43% of those aged 15-34 believe it's "a good time" to find a job in the area where they live, well below the 64% of

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those aged 55 and over who say the same.

Around the world, it's the opposite. Globally, the median share of younger people who say it's "a good time" to find work in their local job market is 48%, compared with 38% among older people.

The findings reveal a generational rift in Americans' views of economic opportunity, with young people feeling increasingly downtrodden about job prospects, while older people still largely think it's a good time to find work. The schism is likely to continue fueling generational divides in politics, where younger voters have focused on economic issues such as housing costs and have registered less faith in institutions.

"It's an incredibly new phenomenon," Benedict Vigers of Gallup said of young Americans' pessimism. He added that last year was the first time in Gallup's decades of polling that young Americans were more pessimistic about the job market than their peers in other developed countries. "Has this happened in most other advanced economies? The answer is a resounding no."

Younger and older Americans differ on how easy it is to find a new job

Young people, with fewer physical limitations and family responsibilities — along with an ability to adapt more quickly than older counterparts — normally are more optimistic about their ability to land work.

But the new Gallup analysis finds the U.S. is one of only five countries where younger people are at least 10 points more pessimistic about the availability of work than older ones, joining China, Hong Kong, Norway, Serbia and the United Arab Emirates.

Among the 141 countries surveyed, younger Americans ranked 87th in job market expectations. Even that is striking, Vigers said, because young Americans have long stood out globally for their optimism about job opportunities. Other countries, such as New Zealand and Canada, had lower levels of optimism among the youngest group, but there was no significant generational divide.

The divergence between younger and older Americans happened suddenly. Every U.S. age group registered a drop in confidence in the job market after 2023 — following a post-COVID rebound in 2021 and 2022 — but those 34 and younger saw the largest decline in recent years. The share of younger Americans saying it was "a good time" to find a job plunged by 27 percentage points from 2023 to 2025. That's comparable to the rate of decline for young people during the 2008 global financial crisis, which also saw a drastic drop in confidence for older Americans. But that hasn't happened in the last few years. In fact, older Americans' views have barely dropped.

Older Americans also have a sunnier view of the economic landscape more generally, according to recent AP-NORC polling. About 8 in 10 adults under 35 describe the U.S. economy as very or somewhat poor, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in April. Only about 6 in 10 adults 55 and older say the same, although a majority still see the U.S. economy negatively.

John Della Volpe, a pollster who regularly surveys U.S. youth for the Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics, said young people are frequently frustrated at how prior generations don't understand their current economic challenges.

"It's just another thing that drains their mental health — 'my parents don't understand that their pathway at this stage in life that I'm in was so much easier,'" Della Volpe said.

Job market optimism among younger adults approaches Great Recession levels

Younger Americans' job market views now register close to the level they did in 2010, when the country was still deep in the Great Recession. This is not the first Gallup poll to find striking levels of pessimism among young Americans — they also register notably high levels of anxiety about pocketbook issues compared with people their age in other countries.

A separate Gallup survey on perceived U.S. job prospects found pessimism emerging at the end of 2024 and continuing into 2025. That coincides with the beginning of President Donald Trump's second term and the rise of artificial intelligence, which many fear will transform the labor market and eliminate many entry-level jobs.

The new poll finds the most frustrated groups of young people are those who haven't secured a first job yet, college graduates and young women. But the heightened pessimism spreads across all subgroups of younger Americans, including men and those who haven't attended college.

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"Whoever they are, they are more pessimistic than they were three years ago," Vigers said of young Americans.

The older Americans who have a less dire view of the job market are themselves more likely to be retired and not looking for work. They're also more likely to own their own homes, a longtime building block of American prosperity that has increasingly seemed out of reach to younger people.

Day-to-day financial concerns were a key issue in the 2024 election, particularly for younger voters, and Trump improved on his previous performance among this group as he ran on a platform of economic prosperity, fighting inflation and affordability. But like other groups that were important parts of Trump's 2024 coalition, some younger Americans have soured on the president as inflation continues, recent AP-NORC polling finds.

About 8 in 10 adults under 35 disapprove of how Trump is handling the economy and the cost of living, the recent AP-NORC poll found, compared with about 6 in 10 older adults.

Russia and Ukraine trade blame for continued fighting as US-brokered ceasefire nears its end

By The Associated Press undefined

A U.S.-brokered ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine was due to expire Monday with both sides accusing each other of breaching the 72-hour arrangement, as American and European officials considered how they might steer the warring countries into further talks.

Ukrainian authorities said Monday that Russian drones, bombs and artillery shelling struck civilian areas of the northeastern Kharkiv and southern Kherson regions, killing at least two people and wounding seven others, including a 14-year-old boy.

Russia's Defense Ministry insisted the military has "strictly observed" the ceasefire and accused Ukraine of repeatedly violating the agreement.

Similar ceasefires announced since Russia invaded its neighbor more than four years ago also have failed to stop the fighting, and U.S.-led diplomatic efforts over the past year have come to nothing.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said data from NASA observations indicated military activities decreased but did not stop after U.S. President Donald Trump announced Friday that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy had accepted his request for a ceasefire running Saturday through Monday.

The move was meant to mark Victory Day, the Russian celebration marking the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The ISW noted late Sunday that "ceasefires without explicit enforcement mechanisms, credible monitoring, and defined dispute resolution processes are unlikely to hold."

Russia and Ukraine prepare to exchange prisoners of war

Trump had said there would also be an exchange of prisoners, declaring that the break in fighting could be the "beginning of the end" of the war. Zelenskyy said the exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side is being prepared.

There are no signs that the two sides are ready to budge from their key negotiating positions, however.

Putin wants all of the Donbas region, Ukraine's industrial heartland, even though his army hasn't completely captured it, but Zelenskyy says he won't surrender it. Zelenskyy has offered a ceasefire and a face-to-face meeting with Putin, which the Russian leader has ruled out until a negotiated settlement is almost finalized.

Putin suggested at the weekend that former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who has had close business ties to Russia, could act as a mediator. But German and European officials scotched that possibility even while accepting that the European Union could take a more significant role in peace efforts after being largely sidelined by Washington over the past year.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who has a friendly relationship with Trump, said in comments published Monday that Europe needs to engage directly with Moscow.

"It's time to start talking to Russia," Stubb was quoted as saying in Italian daily Corriere della Sera.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas cautioned the bloc must get its objectives straight before attempting

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to negotiate with the Kremlin.

"Before we discuss with Russia, we should discuss amongst ourselves what we want to talk to them about," she told reporters in Brussels.

US remains engaged in diplomacy to end the war, Zelenskyy says

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha joined EU foreign ministers for the Brussels meeting. "We have mainstream peace talks under the leadership of the U.S., and we need this track and we need U.S. leadership. But Europe could play also its role," Sybiha said.

Zelenskyy said Monday that Ukraine has "nearly daily communication" with Trump administration representatives. Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council chief, in recent days met with Trump envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner in the United States, according to Zelenskyy.

"Importantly, America remains engaged in diplomacy," Zelenskyy said on X.

Sybiha noted that in recent months Ukraine has improved its performance on the battlefield, reducing the bigger Russian army to a slow and costly slog on the 1,250-kilometer (780-mile) front line, while using its domestically developed long-range drones and missiles to hit targets deep inside Russia.

"We have a new reality on the battlefield ... Ukraine became stronger after the most difficult winter," Sybiha said.

Almost 20 countries seek Ukraine's drone technology

Cutting-edge drone technology has been one of the main drivers of success for Ukraine's short-handed army. It has also drawn other countries' attention, enhancing Ukraine's international standing.

Zelenskyy said nearly 20 countries in the Middle East and the Gulf, the South Caucasus and Europe are at various stages of entering into deals with Ukraine for battle-tested drones. In return, Ukraine is getting fuel and money.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius was the latest senior European official to visit Kyiv, arriving Monday on an unannounced visit set to focus on furthering defense cooperation between the two countries.

Germany has become the world's top provider of security assistance to Ukraine, accounting for roughly one-third of all aid the country receives, Ukrainian Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said Monday, according to Ukrainian media.

Germany has helped provide an "unprecedented package" of air defense missiles for Ukraine, Fedorov said, and has begun financing the production of medium- and long-range strike drones, which he described as critical for deep-strike operations.

Takeaways from AP's profile of a Christian IVF doctor

By TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

Dr. John Gordon, a Christian IVF doctor, was co-director of a large fertility clinic when he started to have doubts about his profession.

He was troubled over helping create surplus embryos, which would often languish in storage or be discarded. With the expansion of genetic testing, couples could choose the sex of their baby. They could screen out painful or fatal diseases, but also milder impairments like hearing loss.

"What are children?" he asked recently. "I mean, are they a gift from the Lord or are they just a product where you're trying to manufacture the best product you can?"

In 2019, Gordon relocated from suburban Washington, D.C., to Knoxville, Tennessee, to create a faith-based clinic aligned with his evolving views. Rejoice Fertility does not discard viable embryos, genetically test them or donate them to science. It facilitates embryo adoptions and tries to limit the number of embryos created.

What is IVF?

Used to treat infertility, in vitro fertilization is an assisted reproductive technology that combines sperm and egg in a lab to create an embryo. The embryo can be frozen and later transferred to a patient's uterus in hopes of achieving a pregnancy.

More than 100,000 U.S. babies were born through IVF in 2024, the most recorded in a single year, ac-

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cording to a recent announcement from the American Society of Reproductive Medicine. Medical experts estimate about 1.5 million frozen embryos are stored in the U.S., though advocates say that number could be higher.

IVF is controversial for some Christians

For Christians and anti-abortion activists who believe life begins with fertilization, IVF can present challenges because of the risks it poses to embryos. Some Christians also believe reproduction should not be separated from marital sex, making IVF and some fertility interventions off-limits.

The Catholic Church has long opposed IVF, and evangelicals are increasingly grappling with it. In 2024, the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest U.S. Protestant denomination, called for IVF restrictions when it destroys "embryonic human life."

Gordon belongs to the Presbyterian Church in America, an evangelical Reformed denomination. His local church has been supportive of Rejoice's mission.

The wider debate

Recent legal decisions have prompted questions about IVF, from the U.S. Supreme Court ending federal abortion rights to the Alabama Supreme Court designating embryos as children. IVF remains popular in polling though, and President Donald Trump has taken steps to expand access.

Gordon believes his practice addresses many moral concerns. As he said, "I need to practice in a way that I can live with the decisions I'm making."

A Christian approach

Rejoice tries to limit surplus embryos. Gordon asks patients for their ideal family size and tailors their treatment around it.

His patients often choose minimal stimulation IVF, or "mini-IVF," which uses less fertility medication and generally results in fewer eggs. Patients may then opt to fertilize fewer eggs, yielding fewer embryos. Patients can also choose natural cycle IVF, which retrieves one egg produced during a woman's regular monthly cycle. Other clinics offer these options but Rejoice is unusual in prioritizing them.

The downside is if patients go through their limited embryos and need another IVF cycle, which typically costs between \$8,000 and 10,000 at Rejoice. Despite that expense, Gordon said his patients largely want to create fewer embryos because of their beliefs.

Embryo adoption is an option

In rare cases when his patients have unused embryos, Gordon asks them to be placed for adoption. Embryo donations are known as embryo adoptions within conservative Christian circles, which view embryos not as property but as children waiting to be adopted.

The clinic recently launched Rejoice Embryo Rescue, which Gordon calls an "orphanage." The clinic stores donated embryos and works with agencies, most of them Christian, that specialize in coordinating embryo adoptions.

Today in History: May 12

Tens of thousands die in Sichuan earthquake

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, May 12, the 132nd day of 2026. There are 233 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 12, 2008, a devastating 7.9 magnitude earthquake in China's Sichuan province left more than 87,000 people dead or missing.

Also on this date:

In 1780, the besieged city of Charleston, South Carolina, surrendered to British forces in one of the worst American defeats of the Revolutionary War.

In 1846, the pioneers of the Donner Party left Independence, Missouri, on the Oregon Trail, beginning their ill-fated attempt to migrate to California.

In 1932, the body of Charles Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old kidnapped son of Charles and Anne Lind-

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bergh, was found in a wooded area near Hopewell, New Jersey.

In 1933, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration established both the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which provided federal funding to states for relief programs, and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which provided economic support to farmers through agricultural surplus reductions.

In 1949, the Soviet Union lifted the Berlin Blockade, which the Western powers had succeeded in circumventing with their Berlin Airlift.

In 1975, members of the new Khmer Rouge-led Cambodian government seized an American merchant ship, the SS Mayaguez, in international waters, sparking a three-day battle that resulted in the deaths of 41 Americans.

In 1982, in Fatima, Portugal, security guards overpowered a Spanish priest armed with a bayonet who attacked Pope John Paul II. (In 2008, the pope's longtime private secretary revealed that the pontiff was slightly wounded in the assault.)

In 2017, the WannaCry ransomware attack began rapidly inside computer networks worldwide by exploiting vulnerabilities in mostly older versions of Microsoft Windows. The WannaCry ransomware locked up digital photos, documents and other files and demanded digital currency bitcoin for their release.

Today's Birthdays: Hockey Hall of Famer Johnny Bucyk is 91. Musician Steve Winwood is 78. Actor Bruce Boxleitner is 76. Actor Gabriel Byrne is 76. Singer Billy Squier is 76. Basketball Hall of Fame coach George Karl is 75. Country musician Kix Brooks is 71. Actor Ving Rhames is 67. Actor-filmmaker Emilio Estevez is 64. Chef/TV personality Carla Hall is 62. Actor Stephen Baldwin is 60. Skateboarder Tony Hawk is 58. Actor Kim Fields is 57. Actor Rhea Seehorn is 54. Actor Malin Akerman is 48. Actor Jason Biggs is 48. Actor Rami Malek is 45. Actor Odeya Rush is 29.