

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, May 20

Last Day of School!

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, Catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cook's choice.

School Lunch: Sack lunch made by kitchen.

Girls Region 1A Golf Meet at Dell Rapids, 9 a.m.

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

JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

North Super Region High School Baseball Tournament

Softball at Redfield (JV at 4:30 p.m. followed by varsity)

Track at Warner, 9:30 a.m.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Thursday, May 21

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, green beans, fruit, garlic bread.

Track at Webster, Noon.

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

Sign up for swimming lessons and pass pre-sale at the pool, 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Friday, May 22

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken on bun, oven roasted potatoes, California blend, fruit.

Cheer Tryouts, 10 a.m., Arena

Saturday, May 23

Pickleball, 9:30 a.m., Elementary Gym

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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.

Which Came First, the Moa or the Egg?

Colossal Biosciences says it has developed a 3D-printed artificial eggshell that successfully hatched 26 chickens, a step toward the company's efforts to revive extinct species like New Zealand's 12-foot-tall, flightless moa.

As the largest single cell in nature, an egg acts as a self-contained incubation system, protecting and sustaining a developing organism without a living womb. Natural eggshells are only about 0.4 mm thick and contain membranes and microscopic pores that allow embryos to breathe while keeping out bacteria. Colossal's version replicates that structure using a rigid shell and a hexagonal, silicon-based membrane, allowing embryos to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide.

The company, which previously drew attention for its work on the dire wolf, says the technology could eventually scale from chickens to emus and, one day, the moa, whose fully developed egg is roughly 80 times larger than a chicken egg.

Prediction Market Showdown

The Trump administration yesterday sued Minnesota over a first-of-its-kind statewide ban on prediction markets such as Kalshi and Polymarket.

The Minnesota law, passed Monday and effective Aug. 1, makes it a felony to operate or advertise prediction markets, which let users wager on outcomes of future events ranging from sports games to elections. The measure passed the state Legislature with broad bipartisan support, with lawmakers expressing concern that the fast-growing online markets constitute an unregulated form of gambling.

With the exception of tribal-owned casinos and horse races, gambling and sports betting are illegal in Minnesota. The Trump administration contends that prediction markets are federally regulated financial instruments rather than gambling products typically overseen by states.

Together, Kalshi and Polymarket generate about \$25B in monthly trading volume, up from \$2B a year ago. Play with this simulator to understand how wagers work.

Mango Heir Arrested

The son of fashion retailer Mango cofounder Isak Andic was arrested in Spain yesterday in connection with his father's death.

Isak and his son, Jonathan, were trekking in Montserrat Natural Park in December 2024 when the 71-year-old fell roughly 500 feet into a ravine. Mango issued a press release that day characterizing Isak's death as an accident, and police closed the probe after several weeks. However, they reopened the case in March 2025, and in September, a judge changed Jonathan's status from witness to possible suspect.

Isak was born in Istanbul in 1953. After moving to Spain at age 14 in the 1960s, he began selling hand-embroidered T-shirts imported from Turkey to his classmates. In 1984, Isak opened the first Mango store, which has today expanded to around 3,000 outlets in 120 countries.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

British broadcaster pulls "Married at First Sight UK" after contestants claim they were sexually assaulted by their partners.

NAACP calls for boycott of athletic programs at public universities in eight states over redistricting battle. Arsenal wins first Premier League title in 22 years.

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NHL conference finals begin today, with Vegas Golden Knights vs. Colorado Avalanche at 8 pm ET.
Nashville to host 2030 Super Bowl in new \$2.1B Titans stadium.
Tom Kane, voice actor behind Yoda in "Star Wars: The Clone Wars" and Professor Utonium in "The Powerpuff Girls," dies at age 64.
"Grey's Anatomy" spinoff set in rural Texas will premiere next year.

Science & Technology

Google unveils biggest Search update in 25 years, prioritizing conversational queries and interactive answers over link-based results; see all announcements from the company's annual developer conference.
Acclaimed book about AI misinformation accidentally contains fake AI quotes.
Chinese-European spacecraft launches on three-year mission to study how Earth's magnetic field responds to solar wind; will be the first to observe the northern lights for 45 hours straight.
Billion-year-old Canadian rock formations discharge over 150 tons of white hydrogen annually, enough to power over 400 houses for a year.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.7%, Dow -0.7%, Nasdaq -0.8%).
US Treasury yield rises to roughly 5.2%, its highest level since before the 2008 financial crisis, as investors seek higher returns to hold long-term US debt.
LIV Golf reportedly begins preparing potential US bankruptcy plans in case it fails to raise new funds; action comes after its main backer, the Saudi Public Investment Fund, pulled its funding.
OpenAI cofounder Andrej Karpathy joins Anthropic's pretraining team.
Anthropic's cofounders all came from OpenAI.

Politics & World Affairs

Rep. Thomas Massie (R, KY-4) loses primary race to former Navy SEAL Ed Gallrein.
Overall ad spending topped \$32M—the most expensive House primary race in US history.
President Donald Trump backs Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) in Senate primary.
Gunmen in this week's attack at the Islamic Center of San Diego identified as 17-year-old Cain Clark and 18-year-old Caleb Vazquez; materials tied to the deceased suspects include pro-Nazi, anti-Muslim writings.
Roughly 200 Russian soldiers were trained in China last year before returning to fight against Ukraine, per Reuters report.

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Groton Area JV Explodes for 20 Runs; Varsity Shows Improvement Against State Runner-Up Deuel

The Groton Area softball teams split action Tuesday at Clear Lake, as the junior varsity Tigers rolled to a 20-11 victory while the varsity squad dropped a 10-0 decision to the Deuel Cardinals.

Despite the varsity loss, Groton Area coach Amanda Bisbee was pleased with the progress her team showed against one of the state's top Class B programs.

"We did. This was a really good game defensively for our varsity team," Bisbee said. "Compared to when we played them at NECs, we came so much farther. We were stopping the ball and making plays."

Bisbee noted the Tigers approached the game determined to play loose and aggressive in one of their final contests of the season.

"We came into today's game saying these are our last two games of the year, so let's go out, be aggressive, have fun and try some new things," she said. "What have we got to lose?"

In the junior varsity game, Groton Area erupted for 20 runs on 11 hits while leaving three runners on base. Deuel finished with 11 runs on six hits and stranded three runners.

Kaedy Bonn delivered a historic moment for the Tigers, blasting Groton Area's first-ever junior varsity home run. Bonn connected on a three-run homer in the second inning and finished a perfect 3-for-3 at the plate with a home run, two singles and four RBI.

Bisbee said the milestone home run was an exciting moment for the program.

"Kaedy Bonn hit the first Groton home run over the fence," Bisbee said. "JV came out and crushed it. They were running the bases and hitting the ball well. Nice first one."

Arianna Dinger also had a huge offensive performance, going 3-for-3 with three singles and three RBI. McKenna Krause added a double, a single and one RBI.

Emily Jones drove in a run, Jayden Penning added a single and an RBI, and Abby Fjeldheim contributed a single and two RBI in the win.

Deuel also had some offensive fireworks in the junior varsity contest, as Laney Toben blasted a grand slam home run for the Cardinals. Aubrey Lammers added a solo home run and an RBI single for Deuel.

In the varsity contest, Deuel used a six-run second inning to take control on the way to a 10-0 victory over the Tigers.

The Cardinals broke the game open in the second inning as Toben singled home a run, Elle Holden and Kennedy Harmon each drew bases-loaded walks, Rylynn Streich delivered a two-run single, and Tory Engebretson added an RBI groundout.

Deuel added three more runs in the third inning on RBI hits from Gracy Gohring, Toben and Holden before Engebretson connected on a solo home run in the fourth inning.

Kinsley Rowen started in the pitching circle for Groton Area, allowing 10 runs, nine earned, on seven hits over four innings while walking six.



Another night for the history books, as Freshman Kaedy Bonn crushed the FIRST ever out-of-the-park home run for Groton Area Softball during the JV game against Deuel with two runners on base! (Photo courtesy Amanda Bisbee)

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Rylie Rose accounted for Groton Area's lone hit, finishing 1-for-1 at the plate.

Aubrey Lanners earned the win for Deuel, tossing a one-hit shutout over five innings while striking out 14 and walking two.

Toben led the Cardinals offensively with two hits, while Harmon stole two bases as Deuel totaled four stolen bases in the game.

Bisbee said the Tigers competed well against one of the fastest pitchers they have faced this season and against a Deuel team that entered the night as the No. 2 seed after winning the state championship a year ago.

"That's the fastest pitcher we've seen all year, so we played very well against them," Bisbee said. "I'm proud of them. That was a really good game tonight."

Groton Area was scheduled to close out its inaugural softball season Wednesday at Redfield.

"Last I checked tonight, we were 21st out of 30, so still not bad for our first year," Bisbee said. "We were close."

The games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Groton Chamber of Commerce.



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FASTPITCH
SOFTBALL




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City Council approves two four-way intersections

by Elizabeth Varin

The Groton City Council approved the addition of two new four-way stop intersections during its meeting Tuesday evening, including one in the Olson Development on the city's north side and another converting a seasonal stop near the city swimming pool into a permanent traffic control measure.

The first of the four-way decisions came after Quintin Biermann, who lives near the intersection of East 13th Avenue and North Sixth Street, asked the council to consider changing it from stop signs on the east-west roadway to a full four-way stop intersection. He cited potential safety concerns as he sees a lot of cars travel at a high rate of speed when they're coming off the gravel road heading into the area.

"I work odd hours," he said. "I'm home a lot. I see it. And there's a lot of kids in that development."

Councilwoman Jordan Voss-Severson, who lives near that area, agreed about the safety concerns, saying there's only one other stop sign in that development, at the intersection of North Fifth Street and East 13th Avenue.

The council approved adding two more stop signs to the intersection of North Sixth Street and 13th Avenue to make it into a full four-way stop intersection.

Following that decision, the council took up discussion of changing the seasonal four-way stop intersection at North Main Street and East 10th Avenue into a permanent four-way stop.

The intersection southwest of the swimming pool has a flashing red light and portable stop sign that is utilized when the swimming pool is open in the summer. However, council members expressed concerns about traffic speeding through that area.

Councilman Brian Bahr mentioned that the speed limit drops from 25 miles per hour south of that intersection to 15 miles per hour for a couple blocks before the roadway intersects with Highway 12. However, people seem to fly through that area as though the speed limit doesn't drop there.

Council members also cited the traffic collision near that intersection on May 11 where a child was hit by a vehicle.

Mayor Scott Hanlon said people need to be a little courteous while driving, and if they aren't, actions like adding stop signs end up being taken.

The council voted unanimously to add permanent stop signs to the intersection of North Main Street and East 10th Avenue.

In other business, the council discussed several airport-related items, including designating Darrell Hillestad as Groton Airport manager. The council also approved reimbursing Hillestad \$77,403.05 for expenses related to buildout work at the airport, including moving and installing the former baseball/softball park concession stand.

- The city announced the grand opening of the new Groton Baseball Concessions Building at the city's baseball/softball park. The grand opening will take place June 6 during the third annual Day of Play.

- City offices will be closed May 25 for Memorial Day.

- The council heard from Caroline Srstka with the Rural Attorney Recruitment Program and Kaelyn Somsen, who just graduated from the University of South Dakota's Knudson School of Law. Srstka told the council about the Rural Attorney Recruitment Program, which provides qualified attorneys with an incentive payment if they agree to practice for five years in an eligible rural county or municipality. While Brown County does not qualify to participate, the city of Groton does due to its population size, Srstka said. She asked the council to consider agreeing to fund a portion of the \$12,513.60 per year stipend. The South Dakota Unified Judicial System pays half of the stipend, with the remainder being covered by the state bar (15%) and the participating county/municipality (35%). If approved, the annual payment would begin after Somsen, who plans to work with her mother Kari Bartling at Kolker Law Office, passes the state bar exam and is sworn in.

- The council discussed updating the city's official lot line map on display at City Hall. The map was last updated in 2018, said city Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich. Work to update the map would cost the city \$3,500 per hour of engineering time. Council members discussed how it would be financially prudent to be able to update the maps in-house. Councilman Jon Cutler made the motion to get the maps updated, but also ask about purchasing the map data as well. "You don't know until you ask," he said.

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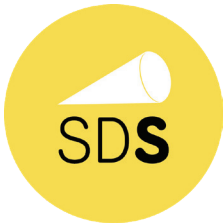


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Campaign finance deadline sheds light on groups seeking to influence South Dakota governor race

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

The candidates themselves are not the only ones raising and spending money in South Dakota's race for governor. Political action committees not officially associated with the candidates have spent over \$1.3 million in recent months, and new campaign finance reports show where some of the money came from.

The June 2 Republican primary includes Gov. Larry Rhoden, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, state House Speaker Jon Hansen and Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden. The winner will advance to the November general election against presumptive Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers.

Political action committees had to file their pre-election campaign finance reports Monday. Those reports show that the largest player among the independent committees active in the race for governor is Rushmore Principles, which is registered in South Dakota but run by Hadyn Smith of Mountain Brook, Alabama. Smith has not responded to messages from South Dakota Searchlight.

The committee's new report shows it received contributions from a federal committee, Republican Forward, totaling \$1.4 million. Rushmore Principles reported about \$1.3 million in spending, including about \$1.2 million on digital media and direct mail opposing Rhoden. The anti-Rhoden messaging has criticized Rhoden's approach to tax policy. Rushmore Principles also reported spending about \$51,500 on direct mail opposing Hansen.

Republican Forward's major contributions include large amounts from the Sioux Falls business community: \$500,000 from POET ethanol, \$300,000 from First Premier Bank Chairman and CEO Dana Dykhouse, \$150,000 from MarketBeat founder and CEO Matthew Paulson, and \$100,000 from Lloyd Companies. Among other donors, Republican Forward has also received \$100,000 from Genesis Farms Cannabis Company, which has multiple medical marijuana outlets across the state.

Republican Forward is a super PAC. Due to U.S. Supreme Court decisions, super PACs are legally allowed to raise and spend unlimited amounts as long as there's no coordination with candidates. In South Dakota, political action committees can receive unlimited contributions from other political action committees.

A state-registered political action committee called South Dakota Safety Action has been active against Hansen. The committee is run by Tabor Shabot from a Sioux Falls address. It reported \$20,000 in total contributions, all from Dan and Jan Joyce of Frankfort, Illinois. The committee spent about \$18,000 on a "Jon Hansen Weak on Crime" mail and text message campaign, the committee's report says.

Dakota First Action, a committee originally founded by Doeden, has promoted a "Republican Primary Voter Guide" through a website branded as South Dakota Tax Watch. The site describes South Dakota Tax Watch as a "policy watchdog," but its disclaimer says it was paid for and approved by Dakota First Action. The guide criticizes Rhoden, Hansen and Johnson while presenting Doeden favorably.

Dakota First Action's most recent state report showed little activity, with \$6,600 raised and about \$10,600 spent during the reporting period, leaving about \$16,300 on hand.

A federally registered group, Virginia-based Defend US PAC, has been active against Johnson with messaging framing him as insufficiently conservative. The committee is on a federal reporting schedule, and its most recent report covered January through March, revealing little to no information about its more recent activity in South Dakota.

Defend US PAC's contributions during the January to March period came from other political action committees or organizations, including \$95,000 from the Affordable Energy Fund PAC, which in turn received

its most recent contributions from other political action committees.

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.

Tension grows between state board and project opponents at hearing on uranium drilling permit

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

HOT SPRINGS — Frustrations boiled over as a state regulatory board weighed whether to allow underground uranium exploration along the southern edge of the Black Hills on Tuesday.

Clean Nuclear Energy Corporation and its Canada-based parent company Nexus Uranium applied for a permit to drill near Craven Canyon, 7 miles north of Edgemont, South Dakota. The canyon is marked with Native American petroglyphs, and the Black Hills were formerly part of the Great Sioux Reservation.

On the second day of a hearing that's scheduled to last all week, audience members raised questions about the validity of process decisions by the state Board of Minerals and Environment, including when portions of the meeting proceeded without being interpreted by a Lakota speaker. Lakota is spoken by tribes in the western part of the state.

"This is institutionalized racism, and you are promoting it," Elizabeth Lone Eagle said, standing from her seat in the audience.

She said the board was "forbidding" the translator "from doing her job, because you want your white colonizer sanitized way of doing things." The audience cheered, and the board did not respond.

Two Lakota interpreters entered into a contract to translate spoken testimony and began Tuesday. The state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources had failed to provide an interpreter Monday, despite having agreed months earlier to appoint one.

As examination of witnesses began Tuesday, attendees held up their phones for photos, videos and audio recordings. Some livestreamed the hearing on social media. Law enforcement officers were posted at the doors, in seats and around the outside of the Mueller Civic Center, where the hearing is taking place.

The use of Lakota interpreters made for a methodical pace.

Clean Nuclear Energy's legal counsel, Matthew Naasz, posed questions to Mike Blady, an executive for Nexus Uranium. Lakota interpreter Leola One Feather translated the questions for the audience. Then, when Blady responded, One Feather translated his response.

Board of Minerals and Environment Hearing Chair Bob Morris commented on the time-consuming nature of interpreting testimony into Lakota, which is something he said the board has no experience with.

"We are going through a process that is unprecedented," he said during the hearing.

Tensions rose when some exchanges went uninterpreted, and project opponents in the audience called out to allow One Feather to translate.

Lone Eagle and other opponents voiced complaints that the company's permit application, which spans several pages, had not been translated into Lakota. Others said the lack of translation is a violation of human rights.

Morris said the state contracted for spoken interpretation services, not written translation services.

The state Board of Minerals and Environment can deny an application to explore for uranium for several reasons, including negative impacts on historical, archaeological or recreational aspects of an area, if those impacts outweigh the benefits of the exploration. The board can also deny the permit if it will negatively affect the productivity of aquifers.

The company said it plans to use 38 sites to drill holes — not 50 as previously indicated — as deep as 700 feet on state-owned land. Each hole would take about two weeks to drill.

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"We always try and leave the project in a better state than we found it," Blady said during the hearing. Some attendees chuckled at the statement.

Clean Nuclear Energy worked with the state and contractors to compile cultural, geological, wildlife and hydrogeological studies, Blady said. He said the project would bring better understanding of underground resources and could contribute to economic development.

Edgemont's City Council and Chamber of Commerce passed resolutions in support of approving the permit. Opponents are raising concerns about negative effects on the nearby canyon and petroglyphs, as well as potential pollution of local groundwater sources by drilling and possible future mining.

The company has additional drilling plans on federally owned land. That portion of the project is under review by the U.S. Forest Service, which estimates it will issue a decision next month.

The proposed drilling near Craven Canyon is separate from another nearby proposal to mine uranium in the Edgemont area that's been pending since the early 2000s. That proposal, from Texas-based enCore Energy, has met staunch opposition from Native Americans and environmental activists, and has been in regulatory and legal limbo. Last year, the federal government's Permitting Council selected enCore's project for inclusion in FAST-41, a process intended to improve coordination among permitting agencies and hold them to deadlines.

Uranium is a metallic, radioactive element used as fuel in nuclear weapons and power plants. Interest in uranium exploration and mining has risen recently in response to nuclear energy's potential to meet the growing electricity demands of data centers.

The hearing in Hot Springs comes on the heels of a victory for people fighting another drilling project in the Black Hills. Rapid City-based company Pete Lien & Sons recently withdrew from an exploratory graphite drilling project that was underway near Pe' Sla, also known as Reynolds Prairie, a sacred ceremonial site for Lakota people in the central Black Hills. The withdrawal came after two lawsuits and the formation of a protest camp at the drilling site.

The hearing in Hot Springs is scheduled to continue through Friday.

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

From clergy to coaches, states including SD debate who should report child abuse and neglect

The biggest dispute centers on information from religious rites such as confession

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA

Conversations with survivors of sexual abuse left Missouri state Sen. Tracy McCreery wondering what could have prevented the harm, leading her to sponsor a bill that would require clergy and religious workers to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Her bill would have forced ministers to report even if they learned of abuse during confession or another religious rite. She urges people to view the issue through the lens of child safety and not against religion.

"Children are just very vulnerable and it's up to us as adults to not allow them to be harmed," the Democrat told Stateline. "There shouldn't be an exception for adults that know about something and just don't report it."

Her bill failed to advance as the Missouri legislative session drew to a close. Other state lawmakers across the country also are grappling with the question of who should be required to report suspected child abuse or neglect, known as "mandated reporters."

Some legislators are weighing whether clergy should be included — and whether they should be forced to reveal information from confessions. Other lawmakers are wrestling with whether sports coaches, talent agents, camp leaders and other professions with access to children should be mandated reporters.

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The religious freedom question played out most recently in Washington state. A Washington law enacted last year requires clergy to report suspected child abuse and neglect, even when they receive the information through confidential communication during a religious rite, such as confession. Catholic bishops and then Orthodox churches sued, saying it violated their First Amendment right to religious freedom. The U.S. Justice Department joined the lawsuit on the bishops' side.

Confession is considered a sacred rite in the Catholic faith. Penitents confess their sins to a priest, who is forbidden by church law from revealing anything said. The Washington law "puts Roman Catholic priests to an impossible choice: violate 2,000 years of Church teaching and incur automatic excommunication or refuse to comply with Washington law and be subject to imprisonment, fine, and civil liability," the bishops' suit said.

A federal judge blocked enforcement of that portion of the law, and the state eventually agreed to drop the obligation. Clergy remain mandated reporters, but state prosecutors do not enforce reporting requirements related to confession.

In New York, a pending bill would add any "clergy member or other minister of any religion" to the list of required reporters, similar to a Kansas bill that passed the state House but died in the Senate this session. Both bills would exempt information received through a confession.

South Dakota lawmakers also considered adding clergy to the state's list of mandated reporters this year, with exemptions for confession, though that idea failed in committee. Church opponents said requiring faith leaders to make "subjective" calls on whether difficult life circumstances or poverty amount to reportable abuse or neglect would interfere with the clergy-parishioner relationship, and run afoul of First Amendment protections.

A pending Vermont bill, however, aims to end the mandatory reporting exception for confession.

McCreery rejects the idea that an adult should be able to confess to abuse in a religious setting without prompting a report, and thinks there are loopholes in reporting laws that undermine child safety.

"That really repulses me," she said. "Why are we not thinking about our obligations to protect the child?"

But Chris Motz, senior counsel with First Liberty Institute, which pursues religious freedom cases, said the Washington litigation should serve as a lesson to other states considering similar bills.

"The lesson for state legislators is going to be that they have to respect long-standing religious rights, while balancing the important interests in safeguarding children," he said. "We don't have to always see things as sort of a winner take all, this or that. We can do a little bit with both hands."

Carrying the legal burden

The bills sometimes define "clergy" widely, including not only ordained leaders such as priests and rabbis, but also those who serve as spiritual leaders of any religious community, church or sect.

Michael W. Halcomb, an ordained minister and assistant professor at Montreat College in North Carolina, told Stateline that if abusers know clergy must report anything disclosed in counseling or confession, they may never seek help at all.

"If reporting is mandated, abusers will likely never come forward for help or counseling," Halcomb said. "That means the abuse stays completely hidden no matter what happens."

Halcomb said many pastors are not equipped to determine where "spiritual guidance ends and a formal criminal confession begins," which could complicate broad reporting mandates.

"Whoever has the ability to isolate a child, in other words, should have to carry the legal burden to report."

But Vermont Democratic state Rep. Esme Cole introduced a bill seeking to repeal the state's clergy-confidentiality exception. Cole said the bill is not aimed at one denomination or only at what is said in confession. She said it is also about abuse known about by church leaders that is never reported; she wants such leaders to be required to report as well.

The issue is personal, Cole told Stateline. A close friend, she said, is an adult survivor of physical and emotional abuse that happened in a church setting when he was about 10. The priest accused of the abuse, she said, never faced discipline and was instead moved elsewhere.

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Cole calls it the “pass the trash” loophole.

“When there’s bad behavior, and by bad behavior I mean real abuse committed by a member of the diocese they move them to the next church over or two churches over,” Cole said. “If we want to stop that kind of movement in its tracks, it needs to be reported.”

Cole’s proposal comes against the backdrop of a long history of clergy abuse allegations in Vermont’s only Catholic diocese. After the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in 2024, another 118 people submitted confidential claims, after previously settling 67 lawsuits for about \$34.5 million, VTDigger reported.

Who else should report?

Other states are debating whether to add coaches and other professionals with access to children to mandated-reporter lists.

If the goal is protecting children, Halcomb said, states should look beyond churches and impose reporting duties on “anyone with unsupervised authority over minors,” including club sports coaches, private tutors and camp volunteers.

This month, Connecticut passed legislation requiring paid municipal youth camp directors, assistant directors and staff members age 21 or older to serve as mandated reporters.

Although the South Dakota clergy proposal failed, the legislature did approve a measure requiring any “coach of a school activity” to be a mandated reporter. Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden signed it into law in March.

California expanded its definition of mandated reporters to explicitly include certain school volunteers, governing board members and private school employees as of July 1, 2026, and requires annual mandated-reporter training. The state also enacted a law last year that added talent agents, talent managers and talent coaches who work with minors.

Beth Sanborn, a retired Pennsylvania police officer, now leads other school resource officers in mandated-reporter training sessions as a Montgomery County School Safety Coordinator. She asks them to imagine being pressed to describe to a stranger their last sexual encounter.

The question elicits nervous giggles from flustered adult officers, she said. She then asks them to think of a young child who has been sexually abused by a relative, and how the fear and shame can be overwhelming enough for them to not seek help.

“What if you’re an 11-year-old kid and what if it was nonconsensual? What if it was your uncle?” Sanborn said. “Do you really want to share that with a stranger? It became a shared responsibility for us who are trained to recognize these signs.”

In Pennsylvania, Sanborn said she saw a complete shift in mandated reporting after 2012, when the state enacted a law that requires school employees and contractors with direct contact with children to receive training on recognizing and reporting child abuse. The laws were enacted in the aftermath of the Jerry Sandusky scandal at Penn State.

Sandusky, a former assistant football coach, was convicted in 2012 of sexually abusing young boys. The scandal led to the dismissal of Joe Paterno, Penn State’s revered longtime football coach, who was criticized for not doing enough after learning of an allegation involving Sandusky as early as 1998.

Sanborn thinks some school officials, from teachers to officers, hesitate to report because of a common misconception they must prove abuse occurred. The point of mandated reporting, she said, is for adults to pass along a reasonable concern before a child is harmed.

“The school resource officer gets to see one facet of a kid’s behavior. The coach gets to see another. The guidance counselor sees another. The favorite teacher sees another.”

Stateline reporter Robbie Sequeira can be reached at rsequeira@stateline.org.

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

Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

US Senate votes to advance resolution limiting Trump war in Iran as Cassidy flips

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — After voting no seven times, Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., flipped and cast the deciding vote to advance a War Powers Resolution to rein in President Donald Trump's war in Iran without authorization from Congress.

In a 50-47 vote, Cassidy joined fellow Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Rand Paul, R-Ky., who have previously supported the measure.

The vote marks the first time a War Powers Resolution on Trump's Iran conflict has gained enough Republican support to advance to a floor debate.

Cassidy's vote to advance the resolution by Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine came just three days following a loss in the Louisiana GOP primary in which Trump backed challenger Rep. Julia Letlow, R-La.

In a post on social media after the vote, Cassidy said, "While I support the administration's efforts to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, the White House and Pentagon have left Congress in the dark on Operation Epic Fury. In Louisiana, I've heard from people, including President Trump's supporters, who are concerned about this war."

"Until the administration provides clarity, no congressional authorization or extension can be justified," he continued.

Sens. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., and John Cornyn, R-Texas, did not vote. Earlier Tuesday, Trump endorsed Cornyn's Senate primary runoff challenger and state Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Earlier votes failed

Efforts to limit Trump's powers on military action in Iran failed last week in both the House and Senate — though signs of a shift among Republicans showed when Murkowski flipped for the first time to support the measure.

Trump's war in Iran is making his approval ratings sag as gas prices soar and the operation remains at a stalemate.

A New York Times/Siena poll released Monday showed the president's approval rating sank to a new low for his second term, at 37%. On the question of Iran, 64% of respondents said Trump made the wrong decision on launching the conflict.

Thirteen American service members have died in the war, which Trump launched alongside Israel on Feb. 28. The latest Pentagon figures reveal 406 service members were injured during Operation Epic Fury, the administration's name for the conflict.

According to a report released Monday by the Human Rights Activists in Iran organization, which has an address in Virginia, just over 1,700 civilians, including 307 children, have been killed since the war began. Thousands more have been injured, and the report notes the figures "should be understood as minimums."

Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has been choked off since the outbreak of the conflict, causing price spikes in the global oil, natural gas and fertilizer markets.

Americans are paying on average \$4.53 for a gallon of regular gas, according to AAA.

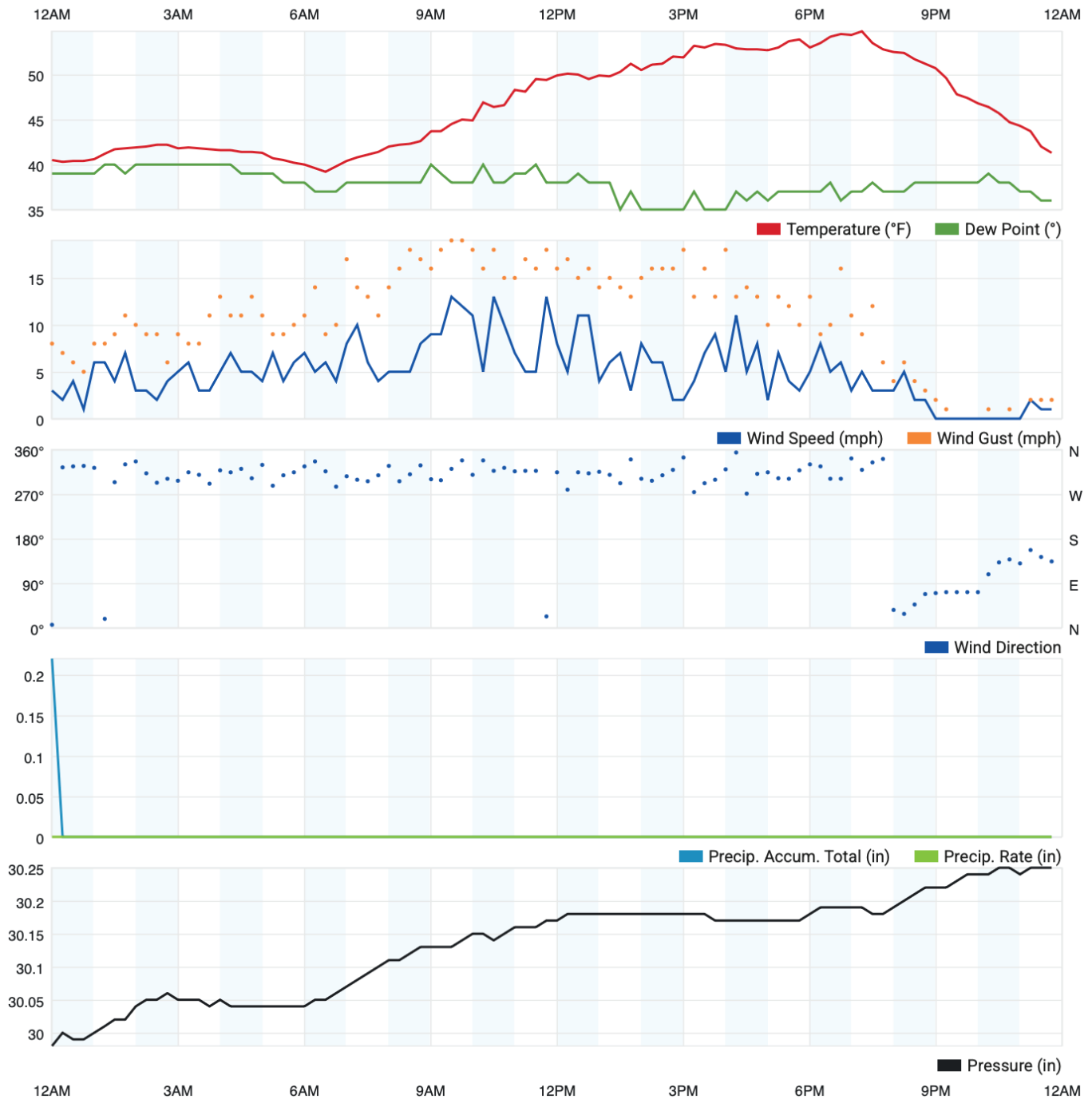
Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 19, 2026



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Wednesday



High: 66 °F

Frost then
Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 40 °F

Partly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 69 °F

Mostly Sunny

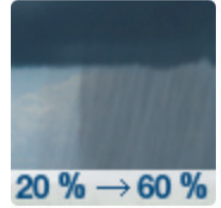
Thursday
Night



Low: 42 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 63 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Showers
Likely

Weather Outlook

Today



63 to 70°

30% chance of light
spotty afternoon
showers
over central SD

Thursday



65 to 71°

Friday



58 to 64°

50-70% chance of
showers - mainly
over central SD in the
morning, expanding
northeast by early
afternoon

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/aberndeen



Temperatures will top out in the 60s to near 70 degrees through Thursday. There is a 30% chance of light spotty showers over south central South Dakota this afternoon. The next chance of widespread showers will arrive Friday, with a 50 to 70% chance of showers over mainly central South Dakota in the morning expanding across northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota by early afternoon. Highs Friday will be in the upper 50s to low 60s.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 55 °F at 7:16 PM

Low Temp: 39 °F at 6:28 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 8:34 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 96 in 1934

Record Low: 23 in 1907

Average High: 72

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in May.: 2.21

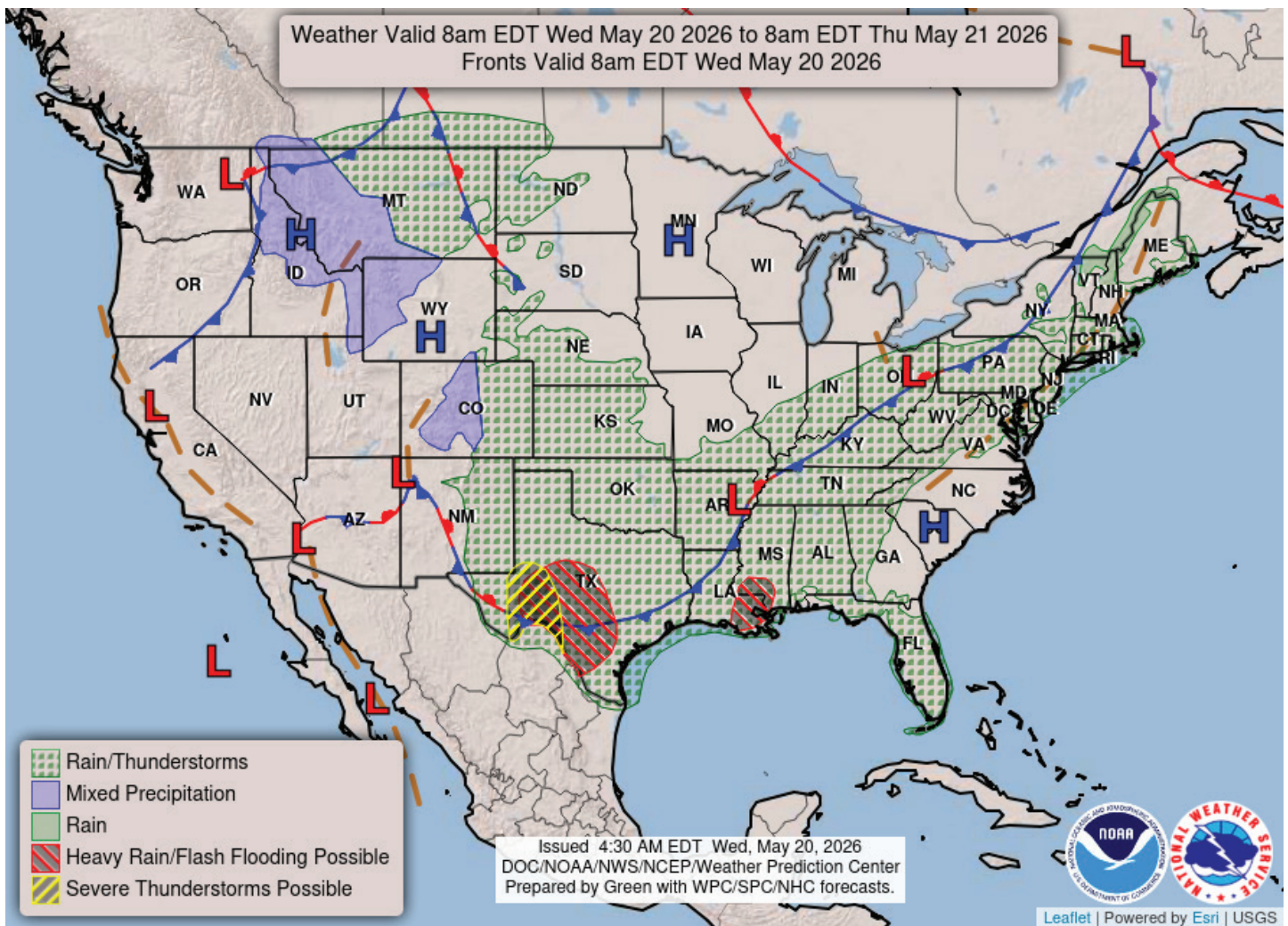
Precip to date in May.: 0.72

Average Precip to date: 6.18

Precip Year to Date: 3.84

Sunset Tonight: 9:01 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:55 am



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Today in Weather History

May 20th, 1965: A tornado hit north of Frederick. On one farm, a barn and all outbuildings were destroyed, and windows exploded outward at the house. The tornado was estimated to have been on the ground for about 5 miles.

May 20th, 1974: Softball-sized hail fell in Kennebec, Lyman County, breaking many windows in schools and other buildings.

1894 — A record late snow of two to eight inches whitened parts of central and eastern Kentucky. Lexington KY received six inches of snow. (The Weather Channel)

1916 — A tornado struck the town of Codell, KS. A tornado struck the town on the same day the following year (1917), and a third tornado hit Cordell on May 20th in 1918. (The Weather Channel)

1957 — A tornado touched down to the southwest of Kansas City and traveled a distance of seventy-one miles cutting a swath of near total destruction through the southeastern suburbs of Ruskin Heights and Hickman Mills. The tornado claimed the lives of forty-five persons, and left hundreds homeless. It was the worst weather disaster of record for Kansas City. About all that remained of one house was a small table and a fish bowl atop, with the fish still swimming about inside the bowl, rather unconcerned. (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1987 — Thunderstorms in southern Texas produced grapefruit size hail, near the town of Dilley ("by dilly"), and produced wind gusts to 73 mph at Lake Amistad. The large hail broke windows, killed small animals, and damaged watermelon. Thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from Indiana to the Dakotas. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Denver IA, and wind gusts to 80 mph in southern Henry County IL. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Thunderstorms in the south central U.S. produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Omaha, NE, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Midland and Dallas, TX. Temperatures in California soared into the 90s and above 100 degrees. San Jose CA reported a record high of 97 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Pre-dawn thunderstorms produced large hail in eastern Oklahoma and northwestern Arkansas. Later in the morning thunderstorms in North Carolina produced dime size hail at Hanging Dog. Thunderstorms also produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Central Plains Region later that day and night, with baseball size hail reported around Lawn, Novice and Eola TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather across the southeastern quarter of the nation through the day and night. Severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes, including one which injured two persons at Algoma, MS, and another which injured nine persons at Rogersville, MO. There were 119 reports of large hail or damaging winds. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Houston MO and damaging winds which killed one person at Toccoa GA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotion

Building a Firm Foundation

When you feel shaken, remember these unchanging truths about God.

Lamentations 3:21-23: 21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.

22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

Our faith isn't built on feelings or wishful thinking—it rests on something far more solid. Let's look at seven foundational aspects of Christianity:

God is. Faith must be built on the simple confession that the Lord is—He is real. He exists and is indeed God (Hebrews 11:6).

God is love. He's intimately concerned with your life and wants to engage in a relationship with you.

God is just. His justice is absolutely perfect—even when He lovingly disciplines us.

God is all-knowing. He knows your heart, your pain, and your questions. You cannot shock or surprise Him.

God is everywhere. You never have to wonder where He is. Wherever you are, He is right by your side.

God is all-powerful. There is nothing greater than God. Regardless of how enormous your challenges and heartaches seem to be, you can overcome them in His power.

God is faithful. No matter how far you stray, He never gives up on you. Whatever you have done, He will always welcome you home.

When doubts arise or circumstances shake you, return to these truths, all of which are solid and unchanging.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.19.26

5 6 42 44 47 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.19.26

10 26 34 56 64 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$296,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 58 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.18.26

23 27 29 36 51 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$27,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 13 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.16.26

14 16 18 32 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$94,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 28 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.18.26

3 13 18 40 63 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 57 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.18.26

4 13 34 61 65 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$113,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 57 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

One of world's largest energy storage plants launches in South Dakota

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

This small city in rural northeastern South Dakota has established itself as an energy hub for the entire Great Plains region, and that reputation has received a big boost by landing what will be among the world's largest energy storage projects.

In a groundbreaking project, South Dakota-based POET has partnered with Antora Energy of California to launch a thermal energy storage system adjacent to POET's ethanol plant in Big Stone City.

The 5 gigawatt-hour thermal energy storage facility will absorb excess, low-cost energy from wind turbines that might otherwise be lost due to capacity limits on the existing power grid and store it in carbon blocks for use when needed.

Officials said the new technology will be a major economic and environmental boost to South Dakota while also pioneering the use of a new energy technology for potential use across the country and the world.

Developers cite potential benefits

Leaders of the two companies told News Watch in exclusive interviews that the storage facility – the first to be put in commercial production by Antora – will generate several benefits now and well into the future for South Dakota, including:

1. The facility will improve efficiency and increase outputs at POET's ethanol plant in Big Stone City by providing a reliable source of sustainable energy both during times of peak and non-peak power demand, ultimately reducing consumer costs for ethanol at the gas pump.

2. It will increase production opportunities for South Dakota corn growers, who will see expanded markets for their grains to be converted into ethanol.

3. It will reduce reliance on fossil fuels by enabling greater storage of energy generated by wind, solar or other sustainable sources.

4. Construction and development of the plant has supported 300 new construction jobs in South Dakota and California and will generate new full-time employment in the Big Stone City area.

"They're taking excess wind energy that doesn't have a home on the grid and otherwise would be wasted, and they're capturing that," said Jeff Lauth, president and chief operating officer of POET in Sioux Falls, the world's largest producer of ethanol.

"Nobody's got a switch for the wind, so it blows when it wants to blow, yet there's a steady demand for power that has to be met, and this system will provide for that."

Andrew Ponec, chief executive officer of Antora Energy, was unwilling to share the total cost of the project. But a press release on the storage project noted that Antora has "catalyzed hundreds of millions in private investment in the company."

Ponec said the majority of costs for the Big Stone project were paid through private financing, led by Grok Ventures of Australia, and not the U.S. government. He added, however, that thermal storage has received strong bipartisan support, including in the Big Beautiful Bill passed by Congress in 2025.

A May 19 press release on the project from POET and Antora included statements of support from U.S. Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden.

"America's need for energy is continuing to rise year after year, (so) the more of that energy we can take right here at home, the better," Rounds said in the release. "(This) project in Big Stone City will have a real economic impact in South Dakota while also creating jobs and boosting our domestic energy production."

A regional power hub set in a small town

Big Stone City was selected as the site for Antora's first large-scale thermal energy storage system because of the existing POET biofuels plant and the Otter Trail Power Co. plant on the site, and due to the

city's location as a major hub on the regional Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) power grid system, Ponec said.

"We're an energy technology company, so we're going to go to wherever there are big concentrations of energy users," he said.

Thermal energy storage collects low-cost, off-peak energy from virtually any source – local wind turbines in this case – and stores it as heat in insulated blocks of solid carbon that reach 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat, which can be stored until needed, is then transferred into an oil that allows it to be carried to industrial users, in this instance the POET plant next door.

There, the heat is transferred to steam that powers boilers, distillers and other machinery used in production of ethanol and a host of other byproducts generated at the POET plant. The Big Stone plant produces 92 million gallons of ethanol annually, Lautt said.

Ponec likened the thermal storage process – which consists of dozens of large white metal boxes on the ground – to the operations of a giant toaster. Electricity from the outlet (energy from wind towers) is transferred to the toaster heating coils (the carbon blocks), which then generates heat to brown the bread (run machinery in the ethanol plant.)

The project uses very little water and does not create any substantial emissions, Ponec said.

To illustrate the nimble nature of thermal storage, Ponec noted that the Big Stone facility was built in less than a year. The facility is already providing power to POET's plant and should be fully online in October.

Another type of energy storage for South Dakota

Thermal energy storage is similar to lithium ion energy storage in that both concepts seek to capture power that can be held until demand goes up and may exceed supply, thereby stabilizing the power grid and reducing costs for consumers.

But while lithium batteries store actual electricity and only for a few hours, thermal storage holds the energy as heat and can hold it for much longer periods, Ponec said.

South Dakota might soon be home to a pair of lithium battery projects, including in Codington and Brookings counties, which backers said will create new opportunities for wind and solar production in the state.

Antora makes money on the project by selling its energy to POET while opening the door to greater sustainable electricity production in the region and lowering power costs for the ethanol plant, Lautt said.

"It creates more efficiency for us, so we're then using less natural gas to operate the facility, which makes us greener," he said. "It really creates a win-win-win all across the footprint."

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

Cherokee Nation integrates culture into new treatment center built with opioid settlement funds

By SARAH LIESE and SIERRA PFEIFER KOSU

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. (AP) — Culture is vital for recovery. That's a lesson Juli Skinner, a citizen of the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma, learned during her time in foster care, years later working in child welfare and now, as the senior director of the Cherokee Nation's behavioral health center.

Tribal traditions have given her a healthy way to self-regulate and strengthen her connection with Spirit. "Culture is such a protective factor," Skinner said. "Historical trauma has hit a lot of people — Native Americans, tribes — hard. Lost language, lost traditional ways, and we'll never get all of that back."

Despite seeing the benefits, culture has never been baked into the inpatient treatment options available to citizens of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, a tribe Skinner has worked with for more than a decade. That is changing next year.

Cherokee Nation plans to open a residential and intensive outpatient treatment center in Tahlequah, where the tribe is headquartered. It will incorporate centuries-old traditions into recovery, including the game of stickball and an on-campus garden to grow selu, or corn.

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Money for the facility comes from the roughly \$150 million the tribe recovered through settlements with opioid manufacturers. The 45,000-square-foot (4,180-square-meter) campus will have 100 inpatient beds and an outpatient hub with follow-up support.

Suing opioid manufacturer

Tribes — like thousands of state and local governments — sued drugmakers, wholesalers, pharmacies and other businesses starting in the last decade over the toll of an opioid crisis that has now been linked to more than 900,000 deaths in the U.S. since 1999.

The companies have so far reached settlements worth nearly \$58 billion, according to a tally kept by Christine Minhee, who runs Opioid Settlement Tracker. Most of the money must be used to address the crisis. For some communities, it's been a struggle to figure out how to use the funds.

About \$1.3 billion of the total is going to hundreds of tribes and Alaska Native corporations over time.

The largest of 575 federally recognized tribes, Cherokee Nation was the first to sue opioid manufacturers in 2017. The tribe has more than 450,000 citizens, many of whom reside in Oklahoma due to federal policies that forced Cherokee people to leave the southeastern United States.

Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. said Cherokee leaders wanted to take an active role in opioid litigation after missing the chance to do so during a similar series of lawsuits against tobacco companies in the late 1990s.

"There will never be another era in which there's some industry that does damage to the Cherokee Nation, damage to the Cherokee people, where we will be bystanders looking for state legislatures, state attorney(s) general to get us justice," he said.

'Existential effort'

The opioid crisis has had three waves: First, prescription pain pills that were the biggest killer, then heroin and for the last decade or so, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. The opioid-related death rate for Native Americans was similar to that for white Americans until fentanyl took hold. Since then, and especially through the coronavirus pandemic, Native Americans have had a higher rate of opioid-related deaths.

It's something Ashley Caudle, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, saw firsthand while running her small business last year. She would regularly put free Narcan outside her storefront in Stilwell, a small city 20 miles east of Tahlequah.

"I had to restock that thing every week, almost daily," Caudle said.

In the 14 counties that make up Cherokee Nation, more than 1,000 people died between 2020 and 2024. Hoskin Jr. said many of the deaths were in rural areas, where language and culture are often strongest. Investing in behavioral health preserves the lifeblood of the tribe, he said.

"In many ways, our success here is part of an existential effort," Hoskin Jr. said. "Whether what it means to be Cherokee is going to continue on; that's only true if we have people that continue our lifeways and continue to speak our language and pass that down."

A safe place to recover

Culture is integrated into every part of the new treatment center's design. While choosing the layout, the tribe hosted listening sessions with community members and elders. Cherokee language experts are finalizing a name for the center.

The facility has large windows that offer a view of rolling hills and grazing cattle. It faces the east to greet the rising sun and is a short drive from a sweat lodge. Residential patients will also have access to a stickball court, garden space for traditional foods, a gym and room for meditation.

Skinner said there are typically 50 to 70 tribal citizens who need to be connected to residential treatment each month. Right now, if someone goes to an emergency room, primary care doctor or local clinic and asks for help with substance abuse, the tribe will refer them to a contracted facility, not owned by the tribe.

The new center will be the first of its kind, completely operated by Cherokee Nation, and comes at no cost for tribal citizens.

"I can hardly wait until we have our own," Skinner said.

The new treatment center in Tahlequah will also be one of three locations on the reservation offering

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intensive outpatient care to Cherokee Nation citizens.

Skinner said the tribe is building a continuum of care, which will include a variety of treatment options, not just inpatient care. When someone returns home to where they were living in active addiction, it can be difficult to stay sober.

Cadle, the Cherokee Nation citizen in Stilwell, also knows people who could have benefited from the resources the tribe is building. Both her mother and brother struggled with substance abuse, which eventually led to their deaths.

When thinking about how the new facility in Tahlequah could have impacted their lives, Cadle said, "I guess there's a lot of 'what ifs' and 'woulda, coulda, shoulda,' and that will never change. But the opportunities that people will have with this facility and the potential is huge."

Cadle continues to find her own ways of healing and is passing this knowledge down to her son, Elliot. "If he messes up, it's not 'get out of my house. I never want to see you again,'" Cadle said. "(It's) let's pick yourself back up and let's try again. Same concept I want people to embrace as a community."

Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie charted his own way, until toppled by Trump

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

There aren't many lawmakers like Thomas Massie left in Congress.

The renegade Republican who rose to prominence as an idiosyncratic and stubborn outlier in his party, popular in the Kentucky district that repeatedly sent him to the House, lost his primary bid for reelection Tuesday after a vicious and costly attack by President Donald Trump.

The stunning outcome caps a career like few others and shows the extent of the president's ability to badger, badmouth and eventually boot out his political adversaries — and that no lawmaker is apparently safe. Massie's defeat comes after the Trump-led ouster of Sen. Bill Cassidy in Louisiana over the weekend and the president's endorsement Tuesday of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in his challenge to Sen. John Cornyn, which sent chills through the Senate.

Trump had reserved his fiercest attacks for Massie, a quirky conservative who had become among the most powerful rank-and-file Republicans in the House because of his willingness to vote as he pleased, rather than as the party demanded. And now he's been toppled like so many other Republicans who crossed the president.

Massie was undaunted after losing to Ed Gallrein, a former Navy SEAL handpicked by Trump.

"If the legislative branch always votes with the president, we do have a king," Massie told cheering supporters Tuesday night. But if lawmakers follow the Constitution, he said, "we have a republic."

Massie also teased that his political career may not be over quite yet during the closing moments of his concession speech, as a raucous crowd broke into chants of "2028!" and "President!"

"You've made a compelling argument," he replied. "We'll talk about it later."

Trump said of Massie's defeat: "He deserves to lose."

Massie's rise from backbench to prominence to defeat

Massie rose from the House Republican backbench, charting his own path and showing again and again he was willing to buck his party and the president.

He voted against Trump's big tax cuts bill last year, worried the several trillion-dollar costs would add to the nation's deficits.

He rejected Trump's military forays against Iran and Venezuela, opposed to U.S. intervention overseas, and he routinely voted against U.S. foreign aid, including to Israel, drawing millions of dollars against him from pro-Israel interest groups.

And perhaps most remarkably, Massie, in partnership with Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna of California, persisted in a long-shot effort to force the Justice Department's release of the Jeffrey Epstein files.

It was his work on the Epstein files, perhaps more than any of his repeated votes against spending bills and other party priorities, that elevated Massie's profile.

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Trump lashed out at the “lowlife” Massie as the congressman pushed the issue last year, prolonging a political headache for the White House.

Off the grid and into Congress

First elected in 2012, at the tail end of the GOP tea party wave before Trump’s Make America Great Again movement burst onto the scene, Massie stood out from the start.

An engineer by training, Massie designed several patents — some on display in his office — as well as a debt calculator that blinks in flashing red numerals as the nation’s deficits pile up. He often wears a miniature version of the debt calculator as a lapel pin.

He married his high school sweetheart, Rhonda, and joined her at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They raised their four children living largely off the grid in a solar-power home he designed himself, making him something of a legend among a generation of do-it-yourselfers. He raised cattle, drove an early Tesla and drank raw milk.

Inspired by fellow Kentuckian Rand Paul after having put up lawn signs for the senator’s election, the libertarian-leaning Massie ran for office himself.

Once he won his own House seat, Massie declined to join the newly forming Freedom Caucus, his own far-right views not fully aligning with the conservative coalition.

Trump attacked Massie early and often

Trump set his sights on Massie in 2020 during his first presidential term, when the congressman dared to object to a \$2.2 trillion aid package to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

At the time, Massie refused to allow the COVID-19 package to be approved without a formal roll call, forcing hundreds of lawmakers back to the Capitol. Trump called him a “third rate Grandstander.”

Trump did not let up his criticisms, even after Massie’s wife died in 2024. Massie announced in 2025 that he had remarried, after proposing to Carolyn Grace Moffa, a former Paul staffer, on the steps of the Library of Congress. He said they planned to live on the farm.

The president suggested that Massie got remarried too quickly, writing on social media that “his wife will soon find out that she’s stuck with a LOSER!”

More than 17,000 under evacuation orders as Southern California wildfire threatens homes

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — More than 17,000 people were under evacuation orders in Southern California on Tuesday as a wildfire threatened suburban homes.

The wind-driven Sandy Fire was reported Monday in the hills above Simi Valley, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northwest of Los Angeles.

By Tuesday morning, it had consumed more than two square miles (five square kilometers) of dry brush and destroyed at least one home, according to the Ventura County Fire Department.

The flames were initially pushed by gusts that topped 30 mph (48 kph), but firefighters were aided by calmer winds overnight, said department spokesperson Andrew Dowd.

“We’ve made a lot of progress against this fire with those improved weather conditions,” Dowd said. Crews hoped to make further progress before winds increased again, he said.

The fire was 5% contained. The cause is under investigation.

Evacuation orders and warnings were still in place for several neighborhoods in Simi Valley, a city of more than 125,000 people that was shrouded in smoke as aircraft made water drops.

Meanwhile, firefighters were battling a 23-square-mile (59-square-kilometer) blaze on Santa Rosa Island, off the Southern California coast. The fire destroyed a cabin and an equipment shed and forced the evacuation of 11 National Park Service employees.

There was no containment as of Tuesday morning.

Santa Rosa, a popular destination for camping and hiking, is home to island foxes, spotted skunks and elephant seals.

WHO says risk of global spread of Ebola outbreak is low, but high at national, regional levels

GENEVA (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization said on Wednesday the risk of global spread of the Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda is high at national, regional levels but low at the global level.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said so far 51 cases have been confirmed in Congo in the northern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu provinces in Congo, “although we know the scale of the epidemic is much larger.”

He said Uganda has also told the U.N. health agency of two confirmed cases in Uganda’s capital, Kampala. “Beyond the confirmed cases, there are almost 600 suspected cases and 139 suspected,” he said. “We expect those numbers to keep increasing.”

Residents of Lithuania’s capital told to shelter as drone alarm underlines NATO’s eastern jitters

By LIUDAS DAPKUS Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — Residents of Vilnius were told to take shelter and Lithuania’s president and prime minister were taken to safe locations on Wednesday because of an alarm over drone activity near the border with Belarus, underlining jitters on NATO’s eastern fringe over incursions related to Russia’s war with Ukraine.

An emergency announcement from the military told people in the Vilnius region to “immediately head to a shelter or a safe place.”

The alert, which lasted for about an hour, also led to the closure of the airspace over Vilnius Airport. President Gitanas Nausėda and Prime Minister Inga Ruginienė were taken to shelters, and there was also an evacuation order at Lithuania’s parliament, the Seimas, the BNS news agency reported.

It was the first major alert that sent residents and political leaders in a European Union and NATO capital rushing to shelters since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Lithuania, a member of NATO and the European Union, borders Russia-allied Belarus to the east and Russia’s Kaliningrad exclave to the west. Wednesday’s alert came after the military said it detected drone activity in Belarus, but no drones were sighted over Lithuania.

In recent months, Ukrainian drones aimed at Russia have crossed or come down in NATO territory on numerous occasions. Western officials have blamed what they say is likely Russian electronic jamming of the drones. Russia, meanwhile, has renewed threats that it would retaliate if Ukrainian drones are launched from Baltic countries or if those countries are complicit in their use against Russia.

On Tuesday evening, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys wrote on social media that “Russia is deliberately redirecting Ukrainian drones into Baltic airspace while waging smear campaigns” against Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. “It’s a transparent act of desperation — an attempt to sow chaos and distract from a simple reality: (Ukraine) is hitting Russian military machine hard.”

Budrys’ comment came hours after a NATO jet shot down a Ukrainian drone over southern Estonia. Ukraine apologized for that “unintended incident,” without specifying what had happened.

Last week, Latvia’s government collapsed following an argument over the handling of multiple incidents involving stray drones suspected to be from Ukraine. The defense minister was forced to quit after his party withdrew its support for him, and the prime minister then resigned. The governing coalition had been under strain for months over several other issues.

Where Trump falters with Republicans — and where he holds steady, according to a new AP-NORC poll

By LINLEY SANDERS and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans are unhappier with President Donald Trump's handling of the economy than they were a few months ago, but they're largely continuing to stand behind him as the war with Iran continues, a new AP-NORC poll finds.

About 6 in 10 Republicans approve of how Trump is handling the economy, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's down from about 8 in 10 in February, before the war began.

The poll comes as the war with Iran fuels higher gasoline prices, while the U.S. and Iran struggle to move toward a permanent ceasefire. Trump's hold on the GOP remains strong, as he demonstrated on Tuesday when his handpicked candidate defeated Rep. Thomas Massie, a Trump critic, in a primary election challenge. The findings highlight Trump's continued strength within the Republican Party, even as economic frustration grows.

Ariel Gutierrez, a 55-year-old Republican in Wisconsin, usually requires his teenage children to pay for their own gas. But with spiking gas costs, he's helping out his 15-year-old, who's just learning how to drive.

"The whole Iran issue has just exacerbated it," he said. "Maybe we were seeing it in groceries before, but now — with this push on gas and travel and all that — that is how people want to live the leisure part of their lives ... and it is directly impacting us there now. And yes, that is, I believe from Trump's policies, not from his predecessors."

Trump remains unpopular outside his base. Most Americans continue to disapprove of Trump's approach to both Iran and foreign policy. His overall approval rating in the new poll stands at 37%, up slightly from 33% in April. Nearly all Democrats disapprove of his performance as president, as do about 7 in 10 independents.

The economy remains a struggle

About one-third of U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling the economy. That's in line with an AP-NORC poll conducted in late April, but down slightly from the start of his second term, when 40% of U.S. adults approved.

The economy was a strength for Trump in his first term, but he's struggled with skepticism about his handling of the issue ever since he reentered the White House last year, after repeatedly promising to bring prices down. His second-term economic approval has fallen among Republicans, in particular. While a majority, 63%, still approve, that's down from 79% in February, a few weeks before the war with Iran began.

Richard Baumgartner, a 77-year-old Republican from Las Vegas, believes higher costs are a necessary side effect of the war, which he supports.

"Unfortunately, because of the war, the economy is a little bit off kilter," Baumgartner said. "I think it'll fall back into place after things resolve over there. Temporary price increases — it's unfortunate, but it's something that has to be confronted in a situation like this where you have a very serious problem."

Trump regains some strength on immigration

While economic promises were pivotal to Trump's reelection, so were his goals of stricter immigration enforcement — and this issue may be reemerging as an asset.

Immigration emerged as one of Trump's strengths early in his second term, with about half of U.S. adults saying they liked his approach, but approval of his handling of the issue dipped to 38% in January and February, after months of aggressive immigration enforcement that led to the shooting deaths of two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis.

Now, just under half of U.S. adults, 45%, approve of how he is handling that issue.

Brenda Theiss, an independent from Cullman, Alabama, doesn't like everything Trump is doing. But she gives him credit for being willing to disrupt the status quo to reduce the flow of immigrants who are in the country illegally compared to Democratic presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

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"I liked Obama; I voted for Obama — but Trump was the only one that did something. All of the other presidents sat back and went, 'Well there's nothing we can do,'" the 73-year-old said. "He's closing the border. He did it. Biden didn't do it. For that, I give him one hundred."

Over the past few months, the Trump administration has appeared to recalibrate its approach on immigration, moving in many ways away from aggressive, public-facing tactics toward a quieter approach to enforcement.

Immigration remains one of Trump's stronger issues among Republicans. About 8 in 10 approve of his handling of the issue, which is roughly 10 points higher than the share that say he's doing a good job as president.

Few approve of Trump on Iran or issues abroad

Trump's handling of the war with Iran remains unpopular.

Only about one-third of U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling Iran. Roughly two-thirds of Republicans approve, though an AP-NORC poll conducted last month found that younger Republicans are more likely to disapprove of Trump's performance on the issue than older ones.

Similarly, about one-third of Americans approve of Trump's approach to foreign policy. Though Trump has zeroed in on a more aggressive international approach this year — including capturing the leader of Venezuela and threatening Cuba — Americans' views of his overall handling of foreign policy have not shifted significantly in recent months.

Amanda Wylie, a 22-year-old who lives in Athens, Georgia, says Iran is one of the few issues where Trump doesn't have her support.

"I feel like we're wasting resources over there at this point and not for the benefit of the American people," said Wylie, who identifies as a Republican-leaning independent. "Especially if everyone is worried about gas prices and the ultimate goal of this is to prevent Iran from having a nuclear weapon. Yes, that's important, but at what cost?"

Ukraine ally Britain eases sanctions on Russian oil as fuel prices surge over Iran conflict

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. government has quietly watered down sanctions on Russian oil in an effort to shelter Britons from the cost-of-living squeeze triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

A trade license that came into effect Wednesday permits the import of Russian oil that has been refined into jet fuel and diesel in third countries, such as India and Turkey.

The U.S.-Israeli war on Iran and Iran's closure of the strait, through which about a fifth of the world's oil usually passes, has sent fuel prices soaring around the world and sparked concerns about a shortage of jet fuel.

U.K. Treasury minister Dan Tomlinson said the changes are "for a time limited period and on a very specific issue."

Britain has been one of Ukraine's strongest allies since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, and the government insists its sanctions against Russia remain among the toughest in the world.

But lawmaker Emily Thornberry, who chairs Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, said Ukrainians would "feel very let down" by the move. She said Ukraine's allies should keep squeezing Russia's oil industry, because it "is absolutely crippling their economy."

The U.S. has also eased Russian sanctions. Earlier this week, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent extended a 30-day sanctions waiver allowing the purchase of Russian oil shipments already at sea.

On Tuesday, finance ministers from the U.S., Britain and the other Group of Seven wealthy nations issued a joint statement reaffirming "our unwavering commitment to continue to impose severe costs on Russia in response to its continued aggression against Ukraine."

Xi and Putin highlight their friendship and cooperation on energy and other issues in Beijing visit

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin praised his close ties with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and said their countries are partners in trade and international affairs as they opened bilateral talks Wednesday on his trip to Beijing.

Xi welcomed Putin with a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People only days after meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump. The quick succession of Trump's and Putin's visits highlighted Beijing's growing role as an international superpower, experts say.

Putin greeted Xi warmly as they met for bilateral talks at the Great Hall of the People.

"My dear friend," Putin said. "We are truly delighted to see you. We keep in constant touch, both personally and through our aides in the government."

Xi also stressed the "political mutual trust and strategic cooperation" between the countries, according to Chinese state media. The two leaders have praised each other profusely in the past, with Xi at one point describing Putin as his "best and most intimate friend."

Energy purchases top meeting's agenda

Xi and Putin were set to focus on energy and security as well as their overall ties. The two sides agreed to extend a friendship treaty first signed in 2001, Chinese state media reported.

China became Russia's top trading partner after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Beijing has said it is neutral in the conflict while maintaining trade ties with the Kremlin despite economic and financial sanctions by the U.S. and Europe.

China is the top customer for Russian oil and gas supplies, and Moscow expects the war in Iran to increase the demand.

In his meeting with Xi, Putin stressed their countries' economic ties.

"The driving force behind economic cooperation is Russian-Chinese collaboration in the energy sector," Putin said. "Amid the crisis in the Middle East, Russia continues to maintain its role as a reliable supplier of resources, while China remains a responsible consumer of these resources."

Xi stressed the need of "complete cessation of hostilities" in the Middle East, according to Chinese state media.

"An early end to the conflict will help reduce disruptions to energy supply stability, the smooth flow of industrial and supply chains, and international trade order," Xi said.

A Russian presidential aide said earlier Russia's oil exports to China grew by 35% in the first quarter of 2026 and that Russia is one of the biggest exporters of natural gas to China.

Xi and Putin show a united front on international affairs

Putin also stressed China and Russia's cooperation in foreign policy as "one of the key stabilizing factors on the international stage."

"In the current tense situation on the international stage, our close cooperation is particularly in demand," he said.

In February 2022, just weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China and Russia announced a "no limits" partnership during a trip by Putin to Beijing.

Beijing says it is neutral in the conflict, though in practice it supports Moscow through frequent state visits, growing trade and joint military drills. China has also ignored demands from the West to stop providing high-tech components for Russia's weapons industries.

Image-making visit

The two leaders are scheduled to sign cooperation agreements during Putin's two-day visit.

But regardless of specific deals, the primary purpose of the visit is to reaffirm the countries' ties as well as project Beijing's image as an influential superpower, experts say.

"The optics matter," said Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute at the University of London.

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"The message is clearly one that China maintains friendship and strategic partnership with whichever power it likes, and the USA is just one of them."

Putin and Xi both need to use their close ties in order to prop up their images at home, said Willy Lam, a senior China fellow at the Jamestown Foundation.

Putin "needs to tell his countrymen and the world that Russia has China's support in terms of buying its oil and gas and other tangible and intangible financial support," Lam said.

Meanwhile, for Xi, having both Trump and Putin visit in such close succession is a major source of credit with the country's top Communist leadership.

Putin noted earlier this month that Moscow and Beijing have reached "a very substantial step forward in our cooperation in the oil and gas sector."

"Practically all the key issues have been agreed upon," he said. "If we succeed in finalizing these details and bringing them to a conclusion during this visit, I will be extremely pleased."

Putin also praised their bilateral relationship as a crucial, balancing force in international relations.

"Interaction between such nations as China and Russia undoubtedly serves as a factor of deterrence and stability," he said.

Moscow welcomes China's dialogue with the U.S. as another stabilizing element for the global economy, Putin added.

"We stand only to benefit from this, from the stability and constructive engagement between the U.S. and China," he said.

World shares track Wall Street's retreat as bond markets crank up the pressure

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Shares retreated in Europe and Asia on Wednesday as rising bond yields cranked up pressure on stocks and other investments, undermining the latest AI-driven rally in technology shares.

Bond yields have been climbing as the war with Iran drags on, raising worries over prolonged higher inflation.

U.S. futures were mixed, with the future for the S&P 500 up 0.2% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged 0.1% lower.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX was nearly unchanged at 24,390.32, while the CAC 40 in Paris inched up 0.1% to 7,992.24. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 0.3% to 10,303.23.

In Japan, the Nikkei 225 lost 1.2% to 59,804.41.

The yield on the 10-year Japanese government bond slipped to just below 2.8% but remained at its highest level since 1997. The dollar was trading at 159.05 Japanese yen, down slightly from 159.09 yen late Tuesday.

The euro slipped to \$1.1591 from \$1.1608.

Chinese shares also fell, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng losing 0.6% to 25,656.12. The Shanghai Composite index shed 0.3% to 4,162.10.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dropped 1.3% to 8,496.60.

In South Korea, the Kospi dropped 0.9% to 7,208.95 after a broad sell-off a day earlier. Taiwan's Taiex gave up 0.4%.

U.S. futures were little changed after the S&P 500 fell 0.7% Tuesday, closing at 7,353.61 for its third straight loss since setting its latest all-time high.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.6% to 49,363.88, and the Nasdaq composite sank 0.8% to 25,870.71.

Tech stocks are faltering following huge runs thanks to excitement over artificial-intelligence technology that critics say made them too expensive.

Meanwhile, oil prices have been wavering due to uncertainty about how long the Iran war will keep the Strait of Hormuz closed for oil tankers.

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Attention Wednesday will be focused on Nvidia's latest quarterly results. The chip company has routinely blown past analysts' expectations each quarter and provided forecasts for future growth that have consistently topped Wall Street's.

How it does could determine whether technology stocks and the larger U.S. stock market can maintain their rally. Nvidia fell 0.8% Tuesday and was one of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500 because of its immense size.

Akamai Technologies dropped 6.3% for one of Wall Street's sharper losses Tuesday after the cybersecurity and cloud computing company said it wants to raise \$2.6 billion through a convertible note offering.

Home Depot rose 0.9% after flipping an early loss following its latest earnings report. Its profit and revenue edged past analysts' expectations, but an important measure for retailers that looks at performance for stores more than 1 year old came in below some analysts' expectations.

CEO Ted Decker said Home Depot saw similar demand from its customers as it did throughout last year "despite greater consumer uncertainty and housing affordability pressure."

Many big U.S. companies have been reporting stronger-than-expected profits for the latest quarter thanks in part to their customers continuing to spend despite high gasoline prices and other challenges. That's helped vault U.S. stock indexes to records, but disquiet in the bond market is threatening that.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.66% from 4.61% late Monday and from less than 4% before the war with Iran began. That's a notable increase, and it's part of a worldwide climb that's making stock prices look even more expensive and threatening to slow the economy.

Higher yields can drive up rates for mortgages and loans going to companies to build AI data centers, which has been a big source of growth for the economy.

Yields rose even as oil prices eased.

Early Wednesday, U.S. benchmark crude oil was down \$1.15 at \$103.00 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost \$1.29 to \$109.99 per barrel.

The average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$4.51, according to the AAA motor club, or about 43% more than it cost last year at this time.

Board of Peace will ask the UN Security Council to press Hamas to disarm

By JAMEY KEATEN and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The body overseeing the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in Gaza will ask the United Nations Security Council to press the Hamas militant group to disarm, according to a report seen by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The report by the Board of Peace, an international body set up by U.S. President Donald Trump and tasked with overseeing the fragile ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, is expected to be discussed by the Security Council on Thursday when it meets on the situation in the Middle East.

"At this stage, the principal obstacle to full implementation (of the ceasefire) remains Hamas' refusal to accept verified decommissioning, relinquish coercive control, and permit a genuine civilian transition in Gaza," the report said.

Hamas in a statement rejected the report and said it contains "fallacies."

A diplomat familiar with the report confirmed its authenticity, speaking on condition of anonymity because it has not been made public.

Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan calls on Hamas to surrender its weapons and destroy its vast network of tunnels. It also envisions Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza, the arrival of a new technocratic Palestinian government, deployment of an international security force and the rebuilding of the battered Palestinian enclave after more than two years of war.

Board of Peace head has said the ceasefire has stalled

Last week, the head of the Board of Peace, former U.N. Mideast envoy Nickolay Mladenov, acknowledged

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that the truce had stalled since taking effect in October, saying the deadlock over disarming Hamas had paralyzed progress.

"Reconstruction cannot commence where weapons have not been laid down," the board's report to the Security Council says. "The critical variable — the single factor that unlocks every other element of the plan — is the conclusion of an agreement on the Roadmap for the full implementation of the plan that includes full decommissioning by Hamas and all armed groups in Gaza."

The Palestinian militant group, which led the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that sparked the war in Gaza, has accused Israel of failing to meet its obligations under the first phase of the ceasefire and has sought to link any demilitarization to Israeli troop pullbacks. Israel's military has expanded its control of Gaza since the truce took effect and now controls some 60% of the territory.

The new report calls on the Security Council to "reiterate publicly, clearly and consistently that the decommissioning of weapons in Gaza is not merely a requirement (of the UN's resolution to end the war) but critical for reconstruction to begin, for a timebound Israeli forces withdrawal, and for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood to be pursued."

The Security Council endorsed the Board of Peace in a resolution in November.

Hamas says the report tries to derail the ceasefire

Hamas said the report "contains a number of fallacies that absolve the occupying government of its responsibilities for the daily violations of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza."

The group said the report ignored Israel's "failure to uphold the majority of its commitments" in the ceasefire deal, including the continued restrictions on crossings into the Palestinian territory and preventing the entry of material and equipment needed to repair basic infrastructure and shelter for the largely displaced population.

"The report's adoption of the occupation's conditions regarding disarmament is a dubious attempt to muddy the waters and derail the ceasefire agreement," Hamas said in a statement.

It called on the Security Council and Mladenov to compel Israel to fulfill its commitments under the ceasefire deal's first phase, "foremost among them the cessation of the daily aggression against our Palestinian people in Gaza."

The ceasefire has seen numerous violations

The report noted near-daily ceasefire violations, "some of which are serious, and their human consequences — civilians killed, families living in fear, and continued impediments to humanitarian access — cannot be minimized."

Israel's military still carries out airstrikes in Gaza despite the ceasefire and has pushed deeper into the territory, where it now controls more than it was granted under the ceasefire agreement. Living conditions are dire, with most of the territory's 2 million people living in tent camps lacking basic services.

Mladenov last week said his office is addressing violations by both sides on a daily basis. But he repeatedly cited the disarmament issue as a central sticking point, saying Hamas' obligation to give up its arsenal is "not negotiable" and that progress on all other issues was being held up.

Takeaways from Tuesday's primaries: Massie's loss leaves no doubt about Trump's power over the GOP

By JONATHAN J. COOPER, STEVE PEOPLES, HUMERA LODHI and SIMRAN PARWANI Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump scored another win Tuesday against a Republican rival, dislodging Rep. Thomas Massie in Kentucky's primary and knocking out one of his most outspoken critics on Capitol Hill.

Massie has been a particularly difficult thorn in Trump's side. He pushed for the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files, opposed the war with Iran and voted against Trump's signature tax legislation last year. He lost to Trump-backed challenger Ed Gallrein following the most expensive U.S. House primary in history.

While Trump has racked up several wins this primary season, this one perhaps sends an even more forceful message to the president's Republican critics. Massie was entrenched in his deep-red Kentucky

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district before his feud with Trump exploded, cutting short a congressional career that began in 2012.

Still, Massie will remain in Congress until his term ends in January, and without a Republican primary on the horizon, he now has a freer hand than ever to antagonize Trump.

Massie's defeat is another sign that Republicans give their politicians vanishingly little leeway to cross Trump, who is bent on retribution and has persuaded his voters to defeat his adversaries again and again.

Here are takeaways from primaries in Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

Trump's endorsement continues to carry the day

Gallrein was boosted by significant spending from AIPAC and pro-Israel groups, which provided about half of the money benefiting his candidacy, according to AdImpact.

However, there's no question Trump was the key factor. He has repeatedly shown that Republican primary voters will follow his lead, even as his popularity wanes with the broader electorate.

Before Massie's loss, Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana failed to even make a runoff on Saturday, unable to repair his relationship with Trump five years after voting to convict him during his second impeachment trial. And earlier this month, Trump successfully dislodged five of seven Indiana Republicans he targeted for voting against his redistricting plan.

Trump is flexing his influence in other places Tuesday.

In the race for Georgia governor, Trump backed Lt. Gov. Burt Jones in an unexpectedly ugly battle for the Republican nomination. Jones, who comes from a wealthy Georgia family, has given his campaign \$19 million. But billionaire Rick Jackson, a healthcare tycoon, has put more than \$83 million of his fortune into the race. Trump's endorsement power has rarely been tested against that level of lopsided spending, and Jones and Jackson are heading for a June 16 runoff.

Trump stayed on the sidelines of Georgia's Senate race, leaving a crowded field of hopefuls seeking to take on Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff, who's running unopposed for his party's nomination. But in Alabama, Trump endorsed Rep. Barry Moore for Senate to replace Tommy Tuberville, who is running for governor.

After staying on the sidelines of a Senate runoff in Texas that's taking place next week, Trump on Tuesday endorsed Attorney General Ken Paxton over incumbent Sen. John Cornyn.

Shapiro succeeds in Pennsylvania primaries

While Trump had a big night on the Republican side, Democratic Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro showed some political strength of his own.

Shapiro, who may look to succeed Trump in the White House, endorsed four Democrats running for Congress, three of them in contested primaries. And all four won their primaries.

Shapiro's endorsed candidates included Paige Cagnetti, mayor of Scranton; Bob Brooks, president of the state firefighters' union; Bob Harvie, a Bucks County commissioner; and Janelle Stelson, a former television news personality who narrowly lost two years ago.

It was a relatively low bar in some cases — Cagnetti ran unopposed — but Shapiro did not show any weakness as he plows toward a November reelection in swing-state Pennsylvania that is expected to launch him into the 2028 presidential contest.

Shapiro may have an even stronger case if the four Democrats he picked Tuesday succeed in flipping Republican seats in the fall.

Pennsylvania's Democratic Party chairman Eugene DePasquale told an election night crowd that "no one" is more invested in flipping seats and "taking back the country" than Shapiro.

Trump opponents became politically homeless in Georgia

Georgia offered a case study in just how bad it can get for Republicans who defy Trump — especially those who push back on his false claims of election fraud.

Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and former Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan were among the few Republicans to speak out against Trump's attempt to overturn his 2020 loss. They were on the ballot for governor on Tuesday — Raffensperger as a Republican and Duncan as a Democrat.

Both lost decisively.

Raffensperger spent millions of his own money trying to reintroduce himself to Republicans by remind-

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ing them of his long career in conservative politics before defying Trump. Duncan, meanwhile, tried to convince Democratic voters that they can trust him after renouncing his prior opposition to abortion rights, gun control and the expansion of Georgia's Medicaid program.

It didn't work.

The president has continued to falsely insist that he only lost the 2020 election because of fraud, and he's spread baseless fears about the upcoming November midterm elections.

But the results for Raffensperger and Duncan may remind Republicans of the risks of pushing back.

The leading Republican candidates in the governor's race, Jackson and Jones, have both questioned or denied the 2020 election outcome. Jackson actually ran a political ad in the weeks leading up to the primary attacking Raffensperger for defying Trump's effort to overturn 2020.

Votes were voided in Alabama

More than 100,000 people cast ballots in four of Alabama's seven congressional districts that may not count.

That's because Republican Gov. Kay Ivey moved just last week to postpone the primaries until Aug. 11, emboldened by the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that hollowed out the Voting Rights Act. Republicans across Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana and Tennessee are now scrambling to redraw congressional boundaries to eliminate some majority-Black U.S. House districts to maximize their political advantage.

Over the weekend, thousands of civil rights activists rallied in Alabama against the changes, but the redistricting plan is moving forward. That means ballots cast Tuesday in primaries for Alabama's 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th congressional districts will be voided, the secretary of state says, while state officials restore a previous set of Republican-drawn district boundaries.

However, the district lines remain the subject of litigation as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and other groups try to stop the use of the new map. If they are successful, the Tuesday primaries will determine the party nominees.

You'd be excused for being confused. Alabama voters still chose nominees Tuesday as planned for the 3rd, 4th and 5th congressional districts, as well as for U.S. Senate and a full slate of state and local offices.

Americans are in no mood for higher gas prices

Oregon voters overwhelmingly rejected a 6-cent gas tax increase proposed by the state's Democratic lawmakers.

The measure was failing by huge margins in every county, crossing every political divide — liberal and conservative, urban and rural, prosperous and struggling.

Tax proponents may have fallen victim to bad timing, with the vote coming as Americans already feel stretched by high gas prices brought on by the war in Iran.

Oregon legislative Democrats voted last year for the tax increase and a series of related fee hikes to help pay for road improvements and plug a hole in the state's transportation budget. Republicans responded by launching a successful referendum campaign to put the issue before voters.

The failure of the gas tax was no surprise to Democrats. It also ran counter to the party's national strategy that relies on channeling voter angst about the high cost of living to win back control of Congress.

Rep. David Scott's death is a reminder of Democratic gerontocracy

The late Rep. David Scott, D-Ga., was the fourth Democrat to die in office this term, fueling a growing restlessness on the left over the party's aging leadership. Scott, who was 80 when he died, was seeking a 13th term.

Scott's name appeared on the ballot alongside five other candidates running in the Democratic primary, but votes for him will not be counted.

State Rep. Jasmine Clark won the nomination Tuesday night, and she is almost certain to win the general election in a district that tilts overwhelmingly toward the Democrats.

Young Democrats have been challenging their elders in primaries around the country. Although some have fallen short, the races have channeled angst that an aging generation of lawmakers is unable or unwilling to mount a bare-knuckles opposition to Trump.

Israeli minister orders West Bank hamlet evicted after hearing he may face arrest warrant overseas

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's finance minister has ordered the eviction of a Palestinian village in the Israeli-occupied West Bank that has long been a target of Israeli authorities, saying the measure is a response to reports that he may be a target of international war crimes prosecutors.

It was not clear whether the International Criminal Court is mulling an arrest warrant for the minister, Bezalel Smotrich. The Hague court said it keeps requests and plans for warrants confidential.

But the ICC already has issued arrest warrants for other Israeli figures, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to face war crimes charges connected to Israel's war in the Gaza Strip. Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction but the warrants could make international travel difficult.

Smotrich, who heads a far-right religious party and has led an aggressive expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, did not say whether he had been formally informed by the court of the warrant or whether he was merely responding to media reports. Nevertheless, he said attempts to arrest him marked a "declaration of war."

"From today, any economic or other target that I have the power to harm within the framework of my powers as Minister of Finance and as a minister in the Ministry Defense will be attacked," he said.

He said his first target would be Khan Al-Ahmar, a village of Palestinian Bedouins long caught up in a legal battle to remain on their land. Smotrich, who oversees West Bank settlement policy, signed a directive calling for the immediate evacuation of the village.

It was not clear if the order could be legally challenged and when it would take effect. Israeli media reported that the order still requires approval by Israel's security cabinet. But past attempts to empty the village and relocate its inhabitants have been challenged in court. An anti-settlement watchdog group, Peace Now, said that demolition of village structures could take place within weeks.

"Minister Smotrich seeks to take revenge on The Hague and the international community at the expense of one of the most vulnerable communities, which for years has struggled simply for the right to live on the small piece of land in its possession," Peace Now said. It called the destruction of the village "part of a broader government plan to take control of the entire central West Bank area" and remove Palestinians from the area.

Khan Al-Ahmar lost its legal protection in 2018 when the Israeli Supreme Court rejected an appeal to block its demolition, sparking massive international outcry.

Israel says that the hamlet, home to nearly 200 Palestinians and an EU-funded school, was built illegally on state land. But critics say it is nearly impossible to get a construction permit from Israel, and that the village's demolition and the removal of its residents is a ploy to clear the way for new Jewish settlements.

The village lies in a tract of land where Israel's government is establishing a new settlement bloc called E1, a project that is particularly controversial because Palestinians and rights groups say its strategic location would make it virtually impossible to establish a viable and contiguous Palestinian state.

Israel has already published a tender for the development of the area.

Smotrich was sanctioned by Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway in June 2025, along with Israel's hard-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, for "inciting extremist violence" against Palestinians in the West Bank.

San Diego mosque shooters met online and left writings expressing hate, FBI says

By JULIE WATSON, MICHAEL BIESECKER and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two teenagers who shot and killed three people in an attack on a California mosque were radicalized online where they first met and shared white supremacist views, according to authorities

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and writings they authored.

The pair "didn't discriminate on who they hated," Mark Remily, the lead FBI agent in San Diego, said Tuesday.

The writings, obtained by The Associated Press, include hateful rhetoric toward Jewish people, Muslims and Islam, as well as the LGBTQ+ community, Black people, women, and both the political left and right. Both express beliefs that white people are being eliminated, and one writes about mental health struggles and being rejected by women.

Investigators also found at least 30 guns, ammunition and a crossbow at two residences after Monday's attack in San Diego and were trying to uncover whether the shooters had broader plans, Remily said. The shooters, Cain Clark, 17, and Caleb Vazquez, 18, killed themselves, according to police.

Family of the two teens could not immediately be reached for comment.

Authorities praised the three men they killed — including Amin Abdullah, a beloved security guard — for slowing the attackers at the Islamic Center of San Diego and preventing them from reaching 140 school-children just steps away.

Imam Taha Hassane said Abdullah engaged the suspects in a gunbattle and called for a lockdown on his radio. He "sacrificed his life to stop them from getting inside the classrooms."

The shooting was the latest in a string of attacks on houses of worship and comes amid rising threats and hate crimes targeting the Muslim and Jewish communities since the beginning of war in the Middle East, forcing increases in security.

Writings show shooters' broad hatred

Authorities have said there was no specific threat against the Islamic center, which is the largest mosque in San Diego and also houses a school, police said. In Cain's writings, he calls for Muslims to be "exterminated."

The document includes symbols long associated with white supremacists and Nazis. The two referred to themselves as "Sons of Tarrant," an apparent reference to the white supremacist who attacked mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, killing 51 people.

Muslim American organizations noted that anti-Muslim rhetoric has been on the rise across the U.S.

The two suspects met online before discovering they both lived in the San Diego area, the FBI said. "In terms of how the radicalization occurred, we're still digging into that," Remily said.

James Canning, a spokesman for San Diego Unified School District, said Clark had been attending school online since 2021 and was set to graduate next month. In 2024, he was a member of the wrestling team at Madison High School. Canning said Clark had no record of disciplinary issues in high school.

Neighbors Marne and Ted Celaya said they last saw Clark a few hours before the shooting and that he waved as he got into a car alone and drove away. They described the family as good neighbors and recalled watching Cain grow up.

"It's unbelievable," Marne Celaya said of the shooting. "He's helped me bring in my groceries."

The victims were pillars of the mosque

Police said the security guard opened fire when the shooters arrived at the Islamic Center and tried to barge inside.

As the shooters made their way into the lobby, they wounded the guard, who kept firing at them, forcing them back outside, where the attackers fatally shot him, Police Chief Scott Wahl said.

The pair went back inside and searched through rooms that were emptied during the lockdown, Wahl said. They exited into the parking lot, where they fatally shot Mansour Kaziha and Nadir Awad, according to police. The men drew the attackers farther away from the building, Wahl said.

Kaziha, known as Abu Ezz, "was everything" to the Islamic Center, Hassane said. "He was the handyman. He was the cook. He was the caretaker," Hassane said.

Abdullah had worked at the mosque for more than a decade.

"He wanted to defend the innocent so he decided to become a security guard," said family friend Shaykh Uthman Ibn Farooq.

Hassane cried as leaders of different faiths embraced him at a vigil Tuesday evening to honor the victims.

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He told the hundreds who had gathered at a park next to the center that they were there to celebrate the community's unity.

"We are here to celebrate the patience, the resilience of the Muslim community," he said. "We are here to honor our heroes, our martyrs."

Mosque leaders were used to hate mail

The Islamic Center sits in a neighborhood with Middle Eastern restaurants and markets. It includes Al Rashid School, which offers courses in Arabic language, Islamic studies and the Quran for students ages 5 and up, its website says.

Josie-Ana Edenshaw, who has been going to the mosque for three years, said it was especially welcoming to new Muslims.

"They've always opened their doors, even to people who aren't Muslim, they invite people to Ramadan dinners," Edenshaw said. "Every person at that masjid will smile at you," using the Arabic word for mosque.

The center's imam said Tuesday that the mosque and its community wasn't immune to threats over the years.

"We have never ever expected such things to happen at the Islamic Center of San Diego," Hassane said. "I mean we are used to receiving hate mails, hate messages, people driving by and cursing and all that stuff. But such horrible crime, we have never expected this."

US Rep. Thomas Massie loses Kentucky GOP primary to Ed Gallrein in another victory for Trump

By JESSE BEDAYN and DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

HEBRON, Ky. (AP) — Kentucky U.S. Rep. Thomas Massie lost his Republican House primary Tuesday, becoming the latest Republican lawmaker to anger President Donald Trump and then fall to a primary challenger backed by the president.

Trump handpicked and endorsed Ed Gallrein, whose victory demonstrated the president's influence over GOP voters and growing frustration with Massie's opposition to Trump. In recent weeks several other Republicans have been defeated by Trump-endorsed challengers, including Sen. Bill Cassidy in Louisiana and several Indiana state senators who defied him on redistricting.

Massie, who has served in Congress since 2012, was one of the most outspoken holdouts. He pushed for the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files, criticized the war in Iran and voted against the president's signature tax legislation last year. Still, he tried to convince voters that they could be for both him and Trump.

The race was the most expensive U.S. House primary in history.

After losing, Massie took the stage before a fired-up crowd that cheered and chanted, including slogans such as "no more wars" and "America First!"

"We stirred up something. There is a yearning in this country for someone who will vote for principles over party," Massie said in his speech, which lasted over 20 minutes.

He also criticized unwavering fealty to Trump in Congress: "If the legislative branch always votes whichever way the wind is blowing, then we have mob rule," he said. But if lawmakers follow the Constitution, "we have a republic."

Massie signed off by teasing a run in 2028, saying, "we'll talk about it later."

Gallrein delivered a shorter, more muted speech at his victory party in Covington, where he first thanked Trump, who visited Kentucky in March to give Gallrein a boost.

Gallrein, a former Navy SEAL, ran on his military service and loyalty to the president and accused Massie of forsaking Trump and the party. He is favored to win the general election against Democrat Melissa Strange in the deeply red district.

Speaking with reporters after Massie's defeat, Trump said: "He was a bad guy. He deserves to lose." And White House communications director Steven Cheung said via social media: "Do not ever doubt President Trump and his political power."

The primary turned white hot in the final stretch of the campaign as Massie recruited a phalanx of other

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Republicans, including Rep. Lauren Boebert, in an attempt to show voters that a vote for him was not a vote against Trump. The president, in turn, ratcheted up his social media attacks, calling Massie "an obstructionist and a fool." On Monday, Gallrein shared a stage with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Also Tuesday, Republicans statewide chose U.S. Rep. Andy Barr as their nominee to replace Mitch McConnell, the longtime U.S. Senate leader. In a contest representing a generational changing of the guard for the party, Barr, who was endorsed by Trump, bested Daniel Cameron, a former state attorney general who leaned into his Christianity on the campaign trail.

Some voters were fed up with Massie

Massie's challenge was to win over voters who generally think favorably of Trump, the same man telling them to vote for Gallrein. Gallrein embraced the role Trump gave him and focused his pitch to voters on his personal history and unwavering loyalty to the president.

Capitalizing on voters fed up with Massie bucking the party appears to have worked. Kim Dees, who attended Gallrein's event, said he was "ecstatic," calling the candidate "very authentic" and "a man of honor."

Massie noted that he voted with his party the vast majority of the time. As for the remainder, he said those were on proposals that violated his "America First" principles such as adding to the national debt and getting into military entanglements like the war with Iran.

That's what Jeanine Thomas, from Union, who attended the congressman's party, appreciated about Massie.

"He and Trump had the same campaign promises, and he stuck with them," Thomas said. "He was courageous enough to not toe the line when it was going against what he had promised his constituents that he would do, and unfortunately he was punished for it."

Massie has voted against U.S. aid to Israel and faced accusations of antisemitism. Denying those accusations, he repeatedly argued that he is generally against all foreign aid. But the race drew in millions of dollars against him from pro-Israel interest groups, including from the Republican Jewish Coalition Victory Fund.

That became a stump topic for Massie, and he alluded to it in his concession speech.

"I would have come out sooner, but I had to call my opponent and concede and it took a while to find Ed Gallrein in Tel Aviv," Massie told the crowd.

Trump's ire in recent days turned to Republicans backing Massie. After Boebert posted her support for the incumbent, Trump posted on Truth Social asking for a Republican to challenge her — even though the filing deadline in her home state of Colorado has already passed.

"Anybody that dumb deserves a good Primary fight!" Trump said.

Trump also influenced the Senate primary

The president swayed the race not just through his endorsement but by offering a third challenger, Nate Morris, an ambassadorship just over two weeks before Election Day. Morris, who fashioned himself as the MAGA candidate, withdrew from the race and encouraged his backers to support Barr.

Barr was first elected in 2012 in the 6th Congressional District. He too is favored to win the general election in the Republican-dominated state, against Democrat Charles Booker.

In his victory speech, Barr thanked his primary opponents, Trump and McConnell "for his decades of service to our commonwealth and this country."

During the campaign both Barr and Cameron tiptoed around their relationship with McConnell, whom they previously called a mentor.

McConnell criticized Trump over the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and more recently voted against some of his Cabinet picks. He is stepping down after becoming the longest serving Senate leader in American history, coinciding with a transformation of the party under Trump.

Many Republicans, while admiring McConnell's achievements, see him as out of step with the "Make America Great Again" and "America First" movements spawned by Trump. Both Barr and Cameron took note, and while ingratiating themselves to the president, they put some distance between themselves and the senator.

Trump endorses Ken Paxton in Texas GOP primary, boosting his challenge to incumbent Sen. Cornyn

By THOMAS BEAUMONT, JESSE BEDAYN and KENDRIA LaFLEUR Associated Press

ALLEN, Texas (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday endorsed Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in the Republican primary for the U.S. Senate, supercharging his effort to oust incumbent Sen. John Cornyn in next week's runoff.

"Ken is a true MAGA Warrior who has ALWAYS delivered for Texas, and will continue to do so in the United States Senate," Trump wrote on social media.

News of the endorsement broke during a Paxton campaign event in Allen, Texas, drawing cheers from supporters who began dancing to "YMCA," a Trump campaign anthem.

"I have so much respect for the president and appreciate so much his endorsement," Paxton said.

Paxton and Cornyn advanced to a May 26 runoff after finishing as the top vote-getters in a March 3 primary in which no candidate won a majority. Early voting started Monday and continues through Friday.

Trump's endorsement is the latest of several he has handed out in Republican primaries in an attempt to cull his party of politicians whom he's deemed insufficiently loyal. Recent successes appear to have emboldened Trump, including the defeats of Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy in Louisiana and Indiana state senators who opposed him on redistricting.

He also picked and endorsed a challenger to Kentucky U.S. Rep. Thomas Massie in Tuesday's primary. Massie's push to release the Jeffrey Epstein files and his vocal opposition to the Iran war have grated on Trump. He supported Ed Gallrein, who defeated Massie.

Although the four-term Cornyn has backed Trump's agenda in Washington, Paxton pitched himself as a political warrior for the Make America Great Again movement. Trump's endorsement puts him at odds with his party's establishment, which is convinced that Cornyn is the better candidate for November's general election. The Republican nominee will face Democratic state Rep. James Talarico.

A bitter and expensive GOP battle

Speaking at a campaign event in Lubbock later Tuesday, Cornyn said Trump's endorsement "will certainly have an impact on the race" but added "we're not giving up the fight."

"I know who gets to choose our senators and it's the people of Texas," Cornyn said. "And there's no substitute for that."

Cornyn, who said he had not spoken with Trump about the endorsement, also leaned into an argument he's repeated on the campaign trail: that in November's general election against Talarico, Paxton will be "a weak nominee who jeopardizes everything we care about."

Talarico said in a statement that "it doesn't matter who wins this runoff. We already know who we're running against: the billionaire megadonors and their corrupt political system."

Trump, in his social media post, said Cornyn was "a good man," but "he was not supportive of me when times were tough." He complained, "John was very late in backing me in what turned out to be a Historic Run for the Republican Nomination."

The runoff between Cornyn and Paxton has been a bitter and expensive battle for the future of the Republican Party, and one that was diverting resources from other competitive races elsewhere in the country.

Cornyn's campaign organizations and allied super PACs have been vastly outspending Paxton on advertising since last year, the overwhelming majority of which has been dedicated to attacking Paxton. This week, Cornyn's campaign and groups supporting it will have spent more than \$87 million on advertising, according to the ad-tracking firm AdImpact, including more than \$18.5 million since the March 3 primary.

Paxton's campaign groups and a single super PAC have spent a fraction of what pro-Cornyn groups have, combining to spend a total of \$9.2 million on advertising, about \$4.9 million since the primary election on March 3.

Concerns on Capitol Hill

Senate Republicans left a luncheon lamenting Trump's decision and its implications for Cornyn. GOP leaders have worried publicly that Republicans will have to spend millions more in a general election if

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Paxton is the nominee.

"I'm sad, I'm actually sad," said Republican Sen. Cynthia Lummis, adding that she believed Cornyn had a better chance of winning the general election.

"Now it'll just cost us a fortune," she said.

The endorsement excited supporters at Paxton's event on Tuesday. Caroline Zadeh said it was an "awesome thing" and that she trusts "Trump to do the right thing."

"We've had Cornyn in the office for quite a while," she said of her frustrations with the senator, and "a lot of controversy between him and Trump's administration."

In the other camp, Bennie Newman said he voted for Cornyn on Tuesday before hearing of the endorsement, which came as "a surprise" and "a disappointment."

Newman supports Trump, but he still would've voted for Cornyn because he "has almost been impeccable in terms of his reputation," he said. Referencing some of Paxton's scandals, he said that the attorney general would be a weaker candidate against Talarico in November's general election.

Cornyn and Trump have clashed before

Trump has had an at-times cool relationship with Cornyn, notably after the senator suggested in 2023 that Trump could not win the presidency again in 2024 and that his "time has passed him by."

Cornyn also was an early critic of Trump's plan for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico — a project he now supports.

A former state attorney general and state Supreme Court judge, Cornyn was first elected to statewide office 36 years ago. His understated style and judge's temperament contrast with the fiery rhetoric of Trump and his Make America Great Again movement.

Cornyn has had support from Senate Republican leadership, including South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, who warned that "it is a strong possibility we cannot hold Texas if John Cornyn is not our nominee."

Some Republican leaders have worried the party will need to spend much more money to defend the seat if Paxton is the nominee — money they could be spending on Senate races in more competitive states. Paxton was acquitted in a 2023 impeachment trial on corruption charges. He also reached a deal in 2024 to end a long-running securities fraud case.

While Trump's approval ratings have slumped among Americans overall, he has shown the ability to sway GOP primary voters.

In Indiana, Trump's endorsement helped dislodge five of the seven Republican state senators who were seeking reelection in the May 5 primary after they voted in December against the White House-backed redistricting plan to give Republicans an advantage in U.S. House races.

On Saturday, Cassidy finished third in Louisiana, therefore out of the running in the June 27 runoff for the Republican nomination to the seat he has held for two terms. The Trump-endorsed candidate, U.S. Rep. Julia Letlow, finished first ahead of state Treasurer John Fleming and both will compete in the runoff.

WHO chief concerned over 'scale and speed' of Ebola outbreak as Congo reports 134 dead

By JUSTIN KABUMBA, MONIKA PRONCZUK and JEAN-YVES KAMALE Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization on Tuesday expressed concern over the "scale and speed" of an outbreak of a rare type of Ebola known as Bundibugyo in eastern Congo, where authorities reported 134 suspected deaths and more than 500 suspected cases.

The virus spread undetected for weeks after the first known death as authorities tested for a more common type of Ebola and came up negative, health experts and aid workers said. The Bundibugyo virus has no approved medicines or vaccines.

In Bunia, the site of the first known death, health workers in protective gear moved among residents wearing fabric masks. "I know the consequences of Ebola, I know what it's like," said a worried resident,

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Noëla Lumo.

Congo was expecting shipments from the United States and Britain of an experimental vaccine for different types of Ebola, developed by researchers at Oxford, said Jean-Jacques Muyembe, a virus expert at the National Institute of Biomedical Research.

"We will administer the vaccine and see who develops the disease," he said. But experts said such efforts would take time.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was "deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic," and pointed to the emergence of cases in urban areas, the deaths of healthcare workers and significant population movement.

In Congo, 30 cases have been confirmed, Tedros later told a meeting of the U.N. health agency's emergency committee. He said neighboring Uganda has informed the WHO of two confirmed cases including a death in its capital, Kampala, among people who had traveled from Congo.

WHO expects the outbreak to last for months at least

WHO has declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, requiring a coordinated response. Resources were being rushed to two affected provinces near Uganda. Parts of eastern Congo are in the hands of armed rebels, complicating sending aid.

The head of the WHO team in Congo, Dr. Anne Ancia, said authorities haven't identified "patient zero."

She also said the Ervebo vaccine, used against a different type of Ebola, was among those considered for possible use, but anything approved would take two months to become available.

"I don't see that in two months we will be done with this outbreak," she said.

For now, Ancia said, neither the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention nor the Africa Centers for Disease Control were on the ground, but others were, including Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross.

The UNICEF office in Bunia said it had been sent an initial 16 tons of relief supplies, mainly disinfectants and soaps, personal protective equipment and water purification tablets and water tanks.

Hela Skhiri, UNICEF's Bunia bureau chief, said that the relief supplies would be distributed according to need across three treatment centers in Ituri province.

Cases have been confirmed in the capital of Congo's Ituri province, Bunia; North Kivu's rebel-held capital, Goma; and the localities of Mongbwalu, Nyakunde and Butembo — home to well over a million people in all.

Dr. Peter Stafford, an American doctor, is among the Bunia cases, said Serge, the Christian organization he works for. He had been treating patients at a hospital.

Tedros said an American had tested positive and been transferred to Germany, but didn't confirm the identity of the patient.

There is growing panic among some residents

Ebola is a highly contagious virus and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare but severe and often fatal. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and unexplained bleeding or bruising.

During an outbreak more than a decade ago that killed more than 11,000 people, many were infected while washing bodies for funerals.

"Ebola is very much a disease of compassion in that it impacts the people who are more likely to be taking care of sick folks," said Dr. Craig Spencer, an associate professor at the Brown University School of Public Health who survived Ebola more than a decade ago after contracting it in Guinea.

There was growing panic in Bunia neighborhoods Tuesday. Local authorities urged people to remain calm and adhere to preventive measures including practicing good hygiene and exercising caution during funerals.

"It's truly sad and painful because we've already been through a security crisis, and now Ebola is here too," said Justin Ndasi, a resident of Bunia. "We have to protect ourselves to avoid this epidemic."

The most important challenge is breaking the virus transmission chain, virus expert Muyembe said, adding that most of Congo's previous Ebola outbreaks "were brought under control simply by applying public health measures."

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False negative tests delayed response

Congo has said the first person died from the virus on April 24 in Bunia, but the confirmation did not come for weeks. The body was repatriated to the Mongbwalu health zone, a mining area with a large population.

"That caused the Ebola outbreak to escalate," said Congo's health minister, Samuel Roger Kamba.

When another person fell ill on April 26, samples were sent to Congo's capital, Kinshasa, for testing, according to the Africa CDC. Bunia is more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) away in a country with some of the world's worst infrastructure.

Samples from Bunia were initially tested for the more common type of Ebola known as Zaire, Congolese officials said. They came back negative, said Dr. Richard Kitenge, the health ministry incident manager for Ebola.

On May 5, WHO was alerted of about 50 deaths in Mongbwalu, including four health workers. The first confirmation of Ebola came on May 14.

"Our surveillance system didn't work," Muyembe said. "The Bunia laboratory ... should have continued searching and sent the samples to the national laboratory. Something went wrong there. That's why we ended up in this catastrophic situation."

Only laboratories in Kinshasa and Goma, which is now controlled by the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group, have the capacity to test for the Bundibugyo type of Ebola.

Benjamin Mbonimpa, M23's permanent secretary, has said the rebel government established entry and exit points in Goma and would take responsibility for funeral services if the virus spreads.

"Our priority is to protect the population within our jurisdiction, and we urge people to resume their daily activities," he said.

Matthew M. Kavanagh, director of the Georgetown University Center for Global Health Policy and Politics, has criticized the Trump administration's earlier decision to withdraw from WHO and make deep cuts in foreign aid — "the exact surveillance system meant to catch these viruses early."

The U.S. State Department has said it has provided \$13 million for the response.

Dr. Ancia, of WHO in Bunia, said that cuts in funding had "a marked detrimental effect on humanitarian actors."

On the ground, the response is complicated by lack of resources.

Trish Newport, emergency program manager from Doctors Without Borders aid group said that her team in Bunia identified suspected cases over the weekend in the Salama hospital, where there is no isolation ward. They tried, unsuccessfully, to place them in another health facility in Bunia.

"The team called around to other health facilities to see if they had isolations," she said. "Every health facility they called said, 'We're full of suspects cases. We don't have any space.' This gives you a vision of how crazy it is right now."

Senate advances bill aimed at ending Iran war as Cassidy, after primary loss, flips to support

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate advanced legislation Tuesday that seeks to force President Donald Trump to withdraw from the Iran war, as a growing number of Republicans defied the president's direction on a conflict that has spanned well over two months.

Since Trump ordered the attack on Iran at the end of February, Democrats have forced repeated votes on war powers resolutions that would require him either to gain congressional approval or withdraw U.S. troops. Republicans had been able to muster the votes to reject those proposals, but Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy — fresh off a primary election loss in which Trump endorsed his opponent — switched sides.

The 50-47 vote tally showed that a small but growing number of Republicans are willing to challenge Trump on the Iran war, even though the effort may not advance much further. Three Republicans were absent Tuesday and their votes would be enough to defeat the measure, if they maintain their stance on the war.

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Still, the vote showed how Republicans are increasingly uneasy with a conflict that shows no signs of ending, is stuck in a fragile ceasefire and is causing rising gas prices in the U.S.

"Republicans are starting to crack, and momentum is building to check him," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement after the vote. "We are not letting up."

Republican Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska had all previously voted for similar war powers resolutions and did so again Tuesday. Cassidy supported the legislation for the first time, while Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was again the only Democrat to vote against it.

After his primary election loss last week, Cassidy returned to Washington defiant. He said he was proud of his work to uphold the Constitution and would carefully consider how he would vote on several priorities of the Trump administration going forward.

Trump's grip on the Senate Republican Conference is potentially slipping after Cassidy's primary loss, as well as the president's decision Tuesday to endorse Republican Sen. John Cornyn's primary opponent.

"While I support the administration's efforts to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, the White House and Pentagon have left Congress in the dark on Operation Epic Fury," Cassidy said on social media.

"Until the administration provides clarity, no congressional authorization or extension can be justified."

House will also vote on war powers

Across the Capitol, the House is expected to vote on a similar war powers resolution Wednesday, and Democrats are bullish about their chances of passing it. Another war powers resolution barely failed in the House last week, the vote ending in a tie.

Even if Congress eventually passes legislation to compel Trump to withdraw from the conflict, it's not clear that he would comply. To circumvent requirements of the War Powers Resolution of 1973, the White House has claimed that it has technically ceased "hostilities" with Iran because there is a ceasefire.

Trump this week said he ordered preparations for an attack on Iran on Tuesday, only to call it off to give allies in the Gulf more time to work out an agreement with Iran.

"Peace negotiations are stuck and so day after day after day grocery prices climb, gas prices climb," Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut said in a floor speech.

Lawmakers want more information on Iran war

On Capitol Hill, patience is clearly running out for a war that Trump launched without congressional approval.

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota said he is supportive of Trump's decision to go to war, but that more Republicans are growing concerned about a long-term plan. The administration may have to go into more detail about that, Rounds said.

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 "does provide an avenue for that discussion and debate to occur," Rounds said.

He said he believes it's not the right time to do that, and he would rather "stand strong with the president" at this point. "But I think a number of our members maybe just feel like it's time to have the debate."

Earlier this year, Republican senators voted to advance a war powers resolution on the conflict with Venezuela and compelled the Trump administration to make its case to Congress for the military campaign.

A handful of GOP senators forced a final vote on legislation to withdraw from the conflict. Two of the Republicans — Sens. Todd Young of Indiana and Josh Hawley of Missouri — ultimately flipped after Secretary of State Marco Rubio agreed to a public hearing about the administration's Venezuela strategy.

Arsenal wins its first Premier League title in 22 years after Man City draws with Bournemouth

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

Arsenal's decades-long wait is over.

Mikel Arteta's team was crowned Premier League champion for the first time since 2004 on Tuesday after Manchester City drew 1-1 with Bournemouth.

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"I told you all.. it's done," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice posted on social media with a photo of he and his teammates celebrating.

The result put an end to what might be Pep Guardiola's final title challenge with City after the decorated manager didn't dismiss reports he was set to leave the club at the end of the season.

City needed to win at Bournemouth to take it down to the final game of the campaign on Sunday. But the draw left Arsenal with an unassailable four-point lead at the top, ending its 22-year wait for the title.

Arsenal fans celebrated wildly outside its Emirates Stadium, setting off flares and partying in the street. There were celebrations at the club's training ground, too, where the players had gathered to watch the match.

City threatened another twist in an engrossing title race when Erling Haaland scored in stoppage time to equalize after Junior Kroupi's first-half strike, but it was too late to find a winner.

Arteta's players can now stand alongside club icons Thierry Henry, Dennis Bergkamp and Ian Wright, who previously reached the summit of English soccer. And Arsenal's current class could yet break new ground by winning the Champions League for the first time in its history later this month.

Thoughts of the May 30 final against defending champion Paris Saint-Germain can be put on the back-burner for now.

Now is a time for celebration and relief for Arteta after finishing runner-up in the league three years in a row.

In back-to-back seasons in 2023 and '24, he watched as Guardiola's City chased down Arsenal's lead to be crowned champion. And another chance was missed last year by finishing second to Liverpool.

Once again Arsenal has led the way for most of this campaign and despite seeing its points advantage ebb away during a gripping run-in, it has finally managed to get over the line.

Arsenal's last champion was the so-called "Invincibles" team of 2004, which went an entire campaign without losing in the league.

Since then it has seen Chelsea, Manchester United, City, Leicester and Liverpool all take the title. This is the first time since 2017 that a team other than City or Liverpool has not been crowned champion. It is Arsenal's 14th title and Arteta will hope it is the beginning of a new era of dominance.

He has finally got the better of Guardiola, who he was formerly assistant to at City.

The Spaniard took over at Arsenal in December 2019 — his first role as a manager. After winning the FA Cup in that first season, it has been a frustrating wait for more honors. Even still, he is the second-youngest coach after José Mourinho to win the Premier League at the age of 44.

While his team has not maintained the attractive playing style of former manager Arsene Wenger, it has powered its way to the title with the best defense in the league and earned a reputation as a specialist for set-piece goals.

Time will tell if Arteta adopts a more expansive style in the future, more in-keeping with Guardiola's City.

How City will look going forward is a bigger question, with Enzo Maresco widely considered the front-runner to replace Guardiola.

The future of City's greatest manager overshadowed the buildup to the game after 10 years at the club.

"I should talk with my chairman first," Guardiola said. "After that, when I talk with my chairman.... we will decide. We will talk in the next days."

He was aiming to win the title for the seventh time in England and a second domestic treble after winning the League Cup and FA Cup this term. But Kroupi's curling shot in the 39th minute left City with a mountain to climb.

Bournemouth wasted further chances to extend its lead, and Haaland ensured a tense finish for Arsenal fans when he leveled in the fifth minute of added time.

Ultimately it wasn't enough and Guardiola has gone two years without winning a league title for the first time in his coaching career.

Relegation battle

The fight for survival will go down to the final day of the season after Chelsea beat Tottenham 2-1.

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Spurs are two points ahead of West Ham, which is in the final relegation spot. West Ham needs to beat Leeds on Sunday to have any chance of leapfrogging Tottenham and climbing out of the drop zone.

Tottenham hosts Everton and a draw would likely be enough because of superior goal difference. A win would guarantee safety.

Trump administration prepares to seek Raúl Castro indictment as it pressures Cuba, AP sources say

By JOSHUA GOODMAN, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The Justice Department is preparing to seek an indictment against former Cuban President Raúl Castro, three people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Friday, as President Donald Trump threatens possible military action against the communist-run island.

One of the people told the AP that the potential indictment is connected to Castro's alleged role in the 1996 shootdown of two planes operated by the Miami-based exile group Brothers to the Rescue. Castro was defense minister at the time.

All three people spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation. The Cuban government did not respond to a request for comment on the potential indictment, which was reported earlier by CBS.

Any criminal charge against Castro, which would need to be approved by a grand jury, would dramatically escalate tensions with Havana and ramp up expectations of U.S. military action in Cuba like the one carried out in January in Venezuela to bring President Nicolás Maduro to New York on drug trafficking charges.

Following Maduro's ouster, the Trump administration quickly turned its attention to his ally Cuba and ordered an economic blockade that choked off fuel shipments to Cuba, leading to severe blackouts, food shortages and a collapse in economic activity across the island.

Iran war gave Cuba a breather

The U.S. war in Iran appeared to have given Cuban leaders something of a reprieve from U.S. talk of regime change.

As Trump seeks to wind down that conflict, speculation has been growing that he may soon turn his attention back to Cuba after pledging earlier this year a "friendly takeover" of the country if its leadership didn't open up its economy to American investment and kick out U.S. adversaries.

Richard Feinberg, a professor emeritus specializing in Latin America at the University of California-San Diego, said that any indictment of Castro will play well with voters in south Florida but is unlikely to persuade career war planners in the Pentagon to pursue a second war of choice — this time just 90 miles from Florida.

"There's no easy Venezuela copy," said Feinberg. "There's no clear line of succession and it's hard to imagine regime change without U.S. boots on the ground."

The AP reported in March that the U.S. Attorney in Miami had created a special working group of prosecutors and federal law enforcement to build cases against top Cuban officials amid calls by several south Florida Republicans to reopen its investigation into Castro's alleged role in the 1996 shootdown.

Trump calls Cuba 'a declining country'

Trump declined to discuss a potential indictment on Friday, deferring to the Justice Department.

"But they need help, as you know, and you talk about a declining country — they are really a nation or a country in decline, so we're going to see," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. "We have a lot to talk about on Cuba, but not maybe for today."

CIA Director John Ratcliffe met with Cuban officials, including Castro's grandson, during a high-level visit to the island on Thursday.

Castro, 94, took over as president from his ailing brother, Fidel Castro, in 2006, and then handed power to a handpicked loyalist, Miguel Díaz-Canel, in 2018.

While he largely has avoided the spotlight since retiring in 2021 as head of the Cuban Communist Party, he

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is widely believed to wield power behind the scenes, a fact underscored by the prominence of his grandson, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, who previously met secretly with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Florida straits shutdown a watershed moment in Cuba-U.S. relations

Cuba's shutdown in 1996 of two Cessna aircraft operated by the Brothers to the Rescue was a watershed moment in decades of hostilities between the two countries.

At the time, President Bill Clinton had been cautiously exploring ways to reduce tensions with a Cold War adversary but faced stiff opposition from exiles who organized publicity-seeking flyovers of Havana, dropping anti-Castro leaflets, and aiding Cuban rafters fleeing economic deprivation and single-party rule.

The Cubans had warned the U.S. government for months that it was prepared to defend against what it considered deliberate provocations. But those calls went unheeded and on Feb. 24, 1996, missiles fired by Russian-made MiG-29 fighter jets downed two unarmed civilian Cessna planes just beyond Cuba's airspace, according to an investigation conducted by the International Civil Aviation Organization. A third plane, carrying the organization's leader, narrowly escaped.

"With hindsight, it appears the Castros' motive was to slow down the Clinton outreach because they needed the U.S. as an external enemy to justify their national security posture," said Richard Fienberg, who worked on Cuban issues at the National Security Council at the time.

They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, said Feinberg.

Shortly after the shutdown, Congress passed what became known as the Helms-Burton Act, which codified a U.S. trade embargo enacted in 1962 and made it far more complicated for successive U.S. presidents to engage with Cuba.

To date, the U.S. has convicted only a single person of conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the Brothers to the Rescue shutdown. Gerardo Hernández, the leader of a Cuban espionage ring dismantled by the FBI in the 1990s, was sentenced to life in prison but was released by President Barack Obama during a prisoner swap in 2014 as part of an attempt to normalize relations with Cuba.

Two fighter jet pilots and their commanding officer have also been indicted but are outside the reach of U.S. law enforcement while living in Cuba.

Castro previously investigated for drug trafficking

Castro has been under U.S. criminal investigation before. In 1993, federal prosecutors in Miami considered charging him and several other senior Cuban military officials with cocaine trafficking based on testimony from Colombian traffickers that emerged in the drug trial of former Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega, the AP reported in 2006.

But an indictment never followed amid concerns about the witness' credibility as well as fears that it could risk U.S. intelligence operations and derail Clinton's tentative outreach.

The UAE says drones that targeted its Barakah nuclear power plant came from Iraqi territory

By JON GAMBRELL and MICHELLE PRICE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The drones that targeted the United Arab Emirates' Barakah nuclear power plant all came from Iraq, the country's Defense Ministry said on Tuesday, an indication that Iraqi Shiite militias backed by Iran were likely behind the assault.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack but Tehran and its militia proxies have launched drone attacks targeting Gulf Arab states since Israel and the United States began their war against Iran on Feb. 28. In the past, the militias have provided Iran with a way to deflect blame over such attacks.

There were no reported injuries or radioactive leaks at Barakah after the attack, which Emirati officials said hit a generator on the facility's perimeter.

But at an emergency U.N. Security Council session Tuesday, the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog described his agency's "grave concerns" about the growing trend of targeting operating nuclear plants in the Iran war.

"In case of an attack on the Barakah nuclear power plant, a direct hit, could result in a very high rate of

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radioactivity to the environment," said Rafael Grossi, the International Atomic Energy Agency chief.

The UAE, which has hosted air defenses and personnel from Israel, recently accused Iran of launching drone and missile attacks even after its ceasefire with the U.S. began April 8.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Tuesday he's willing to give Iran a few days to make progress in peace negotiations before the U.S. resumes military strikes.

Later in the day, the Senate advanced a bill aiming to force Trump to seek congressional approval or withdraw from the war, though it was not clear whether the legislation could gain final passage.

On Monday, Trump had said he was "an hour away from making the decision" to launch a new round of strikes and end the fragile ceasefire before he called off the attack. He has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off.

Tensions have risen over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy waterway gripped by Iran while its ports remain under a U.S. naval blockade. A maritime data firm reported Tuesday that ship traffic through the strait more than doubled last week, but still remains a fraction of its prewar levels.

On Tuesday, the U.S. military's Central Command said the blockade has stopped 89 commercial vessels since it started in mid-April.

Trump refrains from setting firm deadline for Iran negotiations

Trump didn't set a firm deadline for Iran on Tuesday, at first saying he was giving Tehran "two or three days." He then said Iran could have until "maybe early next week."

He also said "serious negotiations" were underway to end the war. Key sticking points include U.S. insistence that Iran reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping.

There's also broad disagreement over Iran's nuclear program. Trump has said he wants to remove highly enriched uranium from Iran and prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Speaking to reporters at the White House on Tuesday, Vice President JD Vance said that a failure to stop Iran's nuclear ambitions would lead to other countries pursuing atomic weapons.

"If you have every country in the world scrambling to try to get a nuclear weapon, it would make us all much less safe," Vance said. "And Iran would really be the first domino."

In the Cold War era, U.S. policymakers argued that if a country went communist it could cause neighboring nations to fall like dominoes, too, and the "domino theory" led to efforts, including military interventions, to contain the spread of communism.

Iraqi government condemns strikes on UAE

In Iraq, government spokesman Bassem al-Awadi, without mentioning the Emirati accusations, said that Baghdad "expresses its strong condemnation of the recent drone attacks targeting the UAE."

"We also emphasize the importance of effective regional and international cooperation to prevent any escalation or harm to the stability of the region, or any targeting of the security and sovereignty of sisterly and friendly nations," al-Awadi added.

There were three other drones that targeted the country over the last two days, the UAE added, without elaborating on their targets. Saudi Arabia, which had also condemned the nuclear plant attack, later said it had intercepted three drones that had entered the kingdom from Iraqi airspace.

The \$20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was built by the UAE with the help of South Korea and went online in 2020. It is the only nuclear power plant in the Arab world and can provide a quarter of the energy needs in the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms.

Earlier Tuesday, a prominent Emirati diplomat elliptically criticized regional countries over the attacks his country has faced.

"The confusion of roles during this treacherous Iranian aggression is baffling, encompassing the Gulf Arab region's surrounding states," Anwer Gargash wrote on X. "The victim's role has merged with that of the mediator, and vice versa, while the friend has turned into a mediator instead of being a steadfast ally and supporter."

Maritime firm says ship traffic increased last week through the Strait of Hormuz

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According to the Lloyd's List Intelligence maritime data firm, a total of 54 ships transited the strait the week of May 11, more than double the 25 vessels counted the week before.

Traffic through the strait remains a trickle compared to before the war, when 130 or more vessels passed it each day.

Last week's traffic included 10 China-owned ships after Tehran said it would permit some Chinese vessels to transit, Lloyd's said Tuesday on X. Two were carrying cooking gas headed for India.

Iran has imposed a murky vetting scheme for vessels trying to leave the Persian Gulf, which in some cases has included demanding payment and excludes US and Israeli vessels.

Iran depends on China as the sole remaining major customer for its heavily sanctioned oil. India is suffering a politically sensitive shortage of cooking gas supplies and has secured passage for some of its ships through diplomatic intervention with Iran.

Blanche doesn't rule out considering payments for violent Jan. 6 rioters as he defends \$1.8B fund

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche on Tuesday wouldn't rule out the possibility that people who carried out violence during the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol will be considered for payouts from a new \$1.776 billion fund to pay individuals who believe they were targeted politically.

Pressed during a Congressional hearing over whether those who assaulted police officers would be eligible for compensation from the "Anti-Weaponization Fund," Blanche responded that all people can apply if "they believe they were a victim of weaponization." The acting attorney general also refused to say whether he would direct those responsible for deciding who receives payments — a commission whose members he is tasked with appointing — to restrict funds to those convicted of violence.

"What I will commit to is making sure that the commissioners are effectively doing their jobs, and that includes setting guidelines as you're describing," Blanche told Sen. Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat. The decisions on payouts will be made a five-member commission appointed by the attorney general.

Appearing before Congress for the first time since taking the reins of the Justice Department last month, Blanche was peppered with questions about the fund announced on Monday to compensate those who believe they were mistreated by prior administrations' Justice Department. Blanche said the fund was "unusual" but not unprecedented, adding that those who benefit will not be limited to Republicans or to people who were investigated or prosecuted by the Biden administration. At one point, Blanche said President Joe Biden's son, Hunter — who faced gun and tax prosecutions under his father's administration — could also apply.

Blanche defends \$1.8 billion fund

Tuesday's hearing was meant to address the Trump administration's budget request for the Justice Department but quickly delved into other controversies that have escalated concerns about the erosion of the law enforcement agency's tradition of independence from the White House. Blanche defended the creation of the fund without any acknowledgment that the Trump administration has pursued investigations of Trump's political opponents, sparking criticism that the department is being weaponized in precisely the same way they allege it was under Biden's administration to prosecute Trump.

In the weeks since assuming control of the Justice Department after Pam Bondi's firing, Blanche has moved aggressively to advance the president's priorities — pushing forward cases against Trump's political foes, cracking down on leaks to media outlets and establishing the new fund to resolve Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns.

Democrats described it as an illegal abuse of power designed to line the pockets of Trump supporters with taxpayer dollars. Sen. Chris Van Hollen, the top Democrat on the Senate appropriations subcommittee holding the hearing, blasted the move as a "pure theft of public funds."

"Rewarding individuals who committed crimes is obscene," the Maryland Democrat said. "Every American can see through this illegal, corrupt, self-dealing scheme."

The fund is in keeping with Trump's long-running claims that the Justice Department during the Biden administration was weaponized against him, even though then-President Biden himself was investigated during that time and his son was prosecuted. Merrick Garland, who served as attorney general during the Biden administration, has repeatedly denied allegations of politicization and has said his decisions followed facts, the evidence and the law.

Trump administration has been rewriting the history of Jan. 6

The mere possibility that violent rioters at the Capitol could be considered for payouts is consistent with a Trump administration pattern of rewriting the dark history of Jan. 6, a trend that began when the president pardoned and commuted the prison sentences of the participants in the melee and that continued with the Justice Department firing some prosecutors who put them behind bars.

Under questioning from Merkley, Blanche said that he "will definitely encourage the commission" responsible for deciding on the payouts to "take everything into account." But when asked whether he believes those convicted of violence should be entitled to compensation, Blanche said: "My feelings don't matter."

When Merkley suggested that Trump was using the Justice Department to target his political enemies, Blanche replied that this was precisely the sort of "disgusting" behavior of the Biden administration that the fund was meant to address.

"That is completely inappropriate and wrong," Merkley said. "There is no comparison to the absolute fair minded pursuit of justice under the previous administration, and this administration's pursuit of an enemies list."

Questions over the meaning of 'weaponization'

In announcing the fund Monday, the Trump administration did not name specific individuals who might stand to benefit from it. The money itself would come from the federal judgment fund, which pays out court judgments and compromise settlements of lawsuits against the government.

Blanche told lawmakers that the Justice Department is committed to "full transparency" in providing public information about beneficiaries of the new fund.

"It's not limited to Republicans. It's not limited to Democrats. It's not limited to January 6th defendants. It's limited only by the term weaponization," Blanche said, though the administration has not said how it will define "weaponization."

Meanwhile, there were signs of discomfort about the fund even among some Republican members of Congress. Senate Majority Leader John Thune told reporters that he's "not a big fan," adding that he isn't sure how the administration intends to use it, but doesn't "see a purpose for that."

Thune's comments come after Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, who lost reelection in a GOP primary on Saturday, called it a "slush fund."

"We are a nation of laws," Cassidy said. "You can't just make up things."

US government agrees to drop tax claims against Trump in broadening of IRS lawsuit settlement

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government will permanently drop tax claims against President Donald Trump, according to a settlement document made public Tuesday, in an extraordinary use of executive power that could effectively help shield the president from further examination of his finances and legal conduct.

As part of the settlement deal meant to resolve Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns, the U.S. is "forever barred and precluded" from examining or prosecuting Trump, his sons and the Trump organization's current tax examinations, according to a one-page document posted to the Justice Department's website.

The government is also barred from looking into Trump's family, affiliates and others, according to the document, which is signed by acting Attorney General Todd Blanche. That document is a separate addendum from the original settlement announced Monday, and was quietly added to the Justice Department

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website on Tuesday.

The White House referred Associated Press inquiries to the Justice Department, and the U.S. Treasury did not respond to Associated Press requests for comment.

The settlement refers only to existing audits, not future examinations, the Justice Department said in response to a request for comment on the expanded settlement.

The move comes after the Trump administration announced Monday, as part of the lawsuit settlement, the creation of a nearly \$1.8 billion fund to compensate allies of the Republican president who believe they have been unjustly investigated and prosecuted, an arrangement that Democrats and government watchdogs criticize as "corrupt" and unconstitutional.

The "Anti-Weaponization Fund" of \$1.776 billion will allow people who believe they were targeted for prosecution for political purposes, including by the Biden administration Justice Department, to apply for payouts, creating what Blanche called "a lawful process for victims of lawfare and weaponization to be heard and seek redress."

Blanche, who was grilled by lawmakers on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, would not rule out the possibility that people who carried out violence during the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol will be considered for payouts from the new fund.

Democratic lawmakers and ethics watchdogs slammed the creation of the fund, saying it was corrupt, opaque and had the potential to become a "slush fund" for the president and his allies. Even Republican lawmakers have expressed signs of discomfort about the fund's creation, including Senate Majority Leader John Thune, who told reporters that he's "not a big fan."

Trump told reporters at the White House on Monday that the fund is dedicated to "reimbursing people who were horribly treated."

Daniel Werfel, a former IRS Commissioner during the Biden administration, said he was unaware of instances where the IRS agreed in advance "to permanently forgo examination of previously filed tax returns for a specific person or business."

He said the arrangement granted Trump and his family separate tax rules from other Americans.

"Whether you are the president or Joe the Plumber, people expect the same tax rules and enforcement framework to apply to everybody."

The fund was announced after Trump, his sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr., and the Trump Organization agreed to drop their lawsuit against the IRS and the Treasury Department. The lawsuit alleged that a leak of confidential tax records caused them reputational and financial harm and negatively affected their public standing, among other allegations.

According to the original settlement agreement posted to the Justice Department website Monday, Trump will receive a formal apology from the U.S. government but "will not receive any monetary payment or damages of any kind" from the settlement. Still, the discharge of current potential tax claims could provide protection against any possible outstanding tax liabilities.

Kathleen Williams, the judge handling the lawsuit, dismissed the case on Monday and, in her filing, admonished the government agencies, notably the Justice Department, for failing to be transparent about the settlement.

She said no agency "submitted any settlement documents nor filed any documents ensuring that settlement was appropriate where there was an outstanding question as to whether an actual case or controversy existed."

US stocks fall further from their records after bond markets crank up the pressure

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market gave back more of its record-setting rally Tuesday after bond markets rattled by high inflation cranked up the pressure.

The S&P 500 fell 0.7% for its third straight loss since setting its latest all-time high. The Dow Jones

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Industrial Average dropped 322 points, or 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 0.8%.

The declines followed mixed moves for stock markets abroad, while oil prices eased in their latest yo-yo move. Falling technology stocks in Asia dragged South Korea's Kospi down 3.3%, but Germany's DAX returned 0.4%.

Tech stocks are faltering following huge runs made because of excitement around artificial-intelligence technology, runs that critics said made them too expensive. The stumble comes as oil prices swing on uncertainty about how long the Iran war will keep the Strait of Hormuz closed for oil tankers. That in turn has pushed yields higher in bond markets, which is dragging on economies and pressuring all kinds of other investments.

The wait is on, meanwhile, for Nvidia to report its latest quarterly results. The chip company is due to report on Wednesday, and it's routinely blown past analysts' expectations each quarter. Not only that, it's provided forecasts for future growth that have consistently topped Wall Street's.

How it does could determine whether technology stocks and the larger U.S. stock market can maintain their rally. Nvidia fell 0.8% Tuesday and was one of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500 because of its immense size.

"Every flow has its ebb," Rex Feng, Venu Krishna and other strategists at Barclays Capital wrote in a report. They said investors have been pumping more money than usual into U.S. stock funds, which helped fuel "the fastest rebound in decades; now the pendulum could swing backwards."

Akamai Technologies dropped 6.3% for one of Wall Street's sharper losses after the cybersecurity and cloud computing company said it wants to raise \$2.6 billion through a convertible note offering.

Home Depot rose 0.9% after flipping an early loss following its latest earnings report. Its profit and revenue edged past analysts' expectations, but an important measure for retailers that looks at performance for stores more than 1 year old came in below some analysts' expectations.

CEO Ted Decker said Home Depot saw similar demand from its customers as it did throughout last year "despite greater consumer uncertainty and housing affordability pressure."

So far, many big U.S. companies have been reporting stronger-than-expected profits for the latest quarter thanks in part to their customers continuing to spend in the face of high gasoline prices and other challenges. That's helped vault U.S. stock indexes to records, but disquiet in the bond market is threatening that.

In the bond market, Treasury yields climbed further. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.66% from 4.61% late Monday and from less than 4% before the war with Iran began. That's a notable increase, and it's part of a worldwide climb that's making stock prices look even more expensive and threatening to slow the economy.

Higher yields can drive up rates for mortgages and loans going to companies to build AI data centers, which has been a big source of growth for the economy.

Yields rose even as oil prices eased. The price for a barrel of Brent crude slipped 0.7% to settle at \$111.28, though it's still well above its \$70 level from before the war with Iran.

The average price for a gallon of gasoline rose again overnight to \$4.53, according to the AAA motor club, or about 43% more than it cost last year at this time.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 49.44 points to 7,353.61. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 322.24 to 49,363.88, and the Nasdaq composite sank 220.02 to 25,870.71.

In stock markets abroad, London's FTSE 100 edged up 0.1% despite a 2.2% drop for Standard Chartered. The bank said Tuesday it plans to reduce over 7,800 roles as it steps up artificial intelligence and automation uses. It's the latest big company to cite AI as one of the reasons for cutting jobs.

Trump shows reporters ballroom construction site as lawmakers balk at \$1B for White House security

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Shouting over the banging and clanging sounds from heavy construction equip-

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ment, President Donald Trump on Tuesday gave a group of reporters a closer look at the construction for the White House ballroom he's building on the site of the former East Wing to mount a defense for the project that has hit a speed bump in Congress.

The administration has asked for \$1 billion from taxpayers for security additions on the White House campus, including for the ballroom. But the Senate parliamentarian ruled the proposal could not be included in a bill to fund immigrant enforcement agencies for three years, and several Republican lawmakers have balked at the price tag in an election year where voters are grappling with gasoline, grocery and other prices spurred to new heights by the Iran war and the disruption in oil supplies.

So Trump, ever the pitchman, surprised White House reporters by bringing them to a platform overlooking the construction site on a hot and breezy morning as workers in hard hats and fluorescent yellow vests milled about below.

Easels were set up to display renderings of the ballroom building and at least one of them blew off in the wind. "Give that to me, I'll hold it," Trump told an assistant.

"There will never be another building like this built, that I can tell you," Trump told reporters.

He highlighted the security aspects of the building, notably its "dead flat" roof made of "very strong steel" and said it is "drone-proof" because "if a drone hits it, it bounces off, it won't have any impact — but it's also meant as a drone port, so it protects all of Washington, the roof of the building."

He said the military will "stay on it" to keep watch over the city.

There's no air conditioning or other equipment on the roof for safety reasons, Trump said, explaining that all duct work and equipment like it was hidden within the walls of the complex, which will serve as a "shield" for a military hospital, research facilities, offices for the first lady and her staff, and a full-service kitchen — in addition to a ballroom big enough for 1,000 people.

He said the ballroom building goes down six stories underground and is really "complex" because "everything is intertwined."

"The roof goes with the ground floor, the ground floor goes with the roof. The roof also goes down into the basement," the president said. "This is one well-knit building. One thing doesn't work without the other."

Trump says the ballroom is a 'gift' to the country

He repeated that the \$400 million ballroom cost will be covered by donors, including him, and that the work is being done "in strict coordination" with the military and U.S. Secret Service.

"This is not going to be paid for by the taxpayer," Trump said. "This is a gift to the United States of America."

But it's somewhat of an unwanted present as polling shows most Americans oppose the ballroom, which is embroiled in litigation in federal court. A Washington Post/ABC News/Ipsos poll conducted in April found that a majority, 56%, of U.S. adults oppose Trump's decision to tear down the East Wing to make way for the ballroom, while only 28% are in support.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation sued to halt construction until Congress approves plans for the building.

Trump insisted he will have "very little" time to use the ballroom. He recently announced that it will be ready in September 2028, less than six months before his term ends.

"This is really for other presidents," he said.

Trump sidestepped a question about whether he'll kick in any more of his own money if Congress rejects the \$1 billion funding request.

White House spokesperson Davis Ingle said Trump's tour was not in response to the difficulties brewing in Congress. "President Trump is the most transparent president of all time and was excited to showcase to the press and American people the amazing gift he is giving to the White House and generations of future presidents to come," Ingle said.

Trump also touched on some of the other beautification projects he's undertaking across the city, such as restarting dormant park fountains. He claimed to be spending much less to clean up the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool than did his immediate predecessors — both Democrats.

"I'm doing a job on the Reflecting Lake for a fraction of what they paid," Trump said. He's having the surface coated in a shade of blue and wants to reopen it by July 4. A separate nonprofit group, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, has sued to halt this project.

Nigeria says joint strikes with the US have killed 175 Islamic State group fighters

By OPE ADETAYO and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — A joint operation by the United States and Nigeria against Islamic State group fighters has killed 175 over the past few days, Nigeria's military said Tuesday, while the head of the U.S. Africa Command said it showed the capabilities its forces could bring in Africa, home to the "epicenter of global terrorism."

The U.S. sent troops to Nigeria in February in what was deemed a mostly advisory and training role, but the joint operation signals more active involvement. The U.S. Africa Command, or AFRICOM, confirmed the joint operation, saying no U.S. or Nigerian troops were harmed.

The gains against IS militants followed the killing last week of the deputy of the group's West Africa chapter, Abu Bakr al-Mainuki, the first successful targeting of a senior militant in more than a decade of insurgency in Nigeria.

Nigeria's military on Tuesday reported the killing of another senior leader, Abd-al Wahhab, who it said was responsible for coordinating finance and attack planning and logistics.

Nigerian military spokesperson Samaila Uba said the strikes also destroyed weapons, checkpoints and financial networks of the militants across the country's northeast.

Militant groups like Boko Haram and its IS splinter group operate across vast areas in addition to numerous criminal groups specializing in kidnapping for ransom, generally called "bandits." The crisis has killed thousands of people, according to the United Nations.

U.S. Air Force Gen. Dagvin Anderson, who oversees AFRICOM, told a congressional hearing on Tuesday that Nigeria played a pivotal role in the weekend operations.

"The Nigerians have been instrumental throughout the last several months, developing the target, helping us with the intelligence and providing support in order to do that," Anderson said. "So it could not have been done by our own forces."

The Islamic State group has been pivoting to Africa after setbacks in the Middle East, with West Africa becoming a major site of operation, according to the crisis monitoring group Armed Conflict Location and Event Data.

The "epicenter of global terrorism is in Africa," Anderson said, adding that the operations with Nigeria underscore the relationships that U.S. forces are building on the continent to protect American security interests.

"We cannot operate there and respond to these crises or these threats without the access, basing and overflight that is dependent upon the relationships with these partners," Anderson said. "So we are investing a significant amount of effort in order to build those relationships and build that credibility."

Asked about the biggest challenges to that effort, Anderson replied that "the biggest concern I have is the growing black hole of intelligence in the Sahel" because of the withdrawal of French and other partners and the U.S. withdrawal from Niger.

The military governments of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have turned to Russia as a security partner instead.

Putin visits China to reaffirm Russia ties as Xi also seeks stable US relations after Trump summit

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived Tuesday night in China for meetings with Chinese leader Xi Jinping less than a week after U.S. President Donald Trump wrapped up his own trip to Beijing.

Putin's plane landed in Beijing, where he was greeted by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and an honor guard, as well as youths in light blue shirts waving Chinese and Russian flags and chanting, "Welcome, welcome, warmly welcome!"

His two-day visit is likely to be closely watched as Beijing seeks to maintain stable relations with the United States while also preserving strong ties with Russia.

The Kremlin has said Putin and Xi plan to discuss economic cooperation between the two countries, but also "key international and regional issues." The visit coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship signed in 2001.

China is a key trading partner for Russia, especially after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Beijing has said it is neutral in the conflict while maintaining trade ties with the Kremlin despite economic and financial sanctions by the U.S. and Europe.

Putin said in a video address released before his visit that bilateral ties are at "a truly unprecedented level" and the relationship plays an important role globally, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday.

There is "no connection" between the visits by Trump and Putin, presidential aide Yuri Ushakov said Monday, noting the trip by the Russian leader was agreed in advance, several days after Putin and Xi spoke via videoconference on Feb. 4.

"The Trump visit was about stabilizing the world's most important bilateral relationship; the Putin visit is about reassuring a long-standing strategic partner," said Wang Zichen, deputy secretary-general for the Beijing-based think tank Center for China & Globalization. "For China, these two tracks are not mutually exclusive."

Putin and Xi call each other 'friend'

Putin last visited China in September 2025 to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Tianjin, watch a military parade honoring the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, and hold talks with Xi.

At the time, Xi called his counterpart an "old friend" while Putin addressed Xi as "dear friend." In China, "old friend" is a very rare diplomatic term used by the government and party to describe favored foreigners.

In April, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Beijing and met Xi, who described the bilateral relationship as "precious" in the current international context. Xi said China and Russia needed to strengthen and defend their shared interests.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said over the weekend that Putin's trip also would allow Russia to receive direct updates and exchange views with China on its talks with the U.S.

During Trump's visit, Xi described the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and China as the world's most important and said they should see each other as partners rather than rivals. By the end of the two-day summit, the countries said they would work on a new framework to manage "a constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability."

Wang of the center for China & Globalization observed, "Beijing wants stable relations with the West, continued strategic trust with Moscow, and enough diplomatic room to present itself as an unbiased major power capable of talking to all sides."

China is Russia's primary trade partner

For some, Putin's visit is meant to reinforce the partnership between Russia and China that has strengthened in recent years.

China has become Russia's top trading partner following the start of the war in Ukraine, and is the top customer for Russian oil and gas supplies. Moscow expects the war in Iran to increase the demand. China

also has ignored demands from the West to stop providing high-tech components for Russia's weapons industries.

Ushakov, the Russian presidential aide, said Russia's oil exports to China grew by 35% in the first quarter of 2026 and that Russia is one of the biggest exporters of natural gas to China.

During "the crisis in the Middle East," Russia remains a reliable energy supplier and China is a "responsible consumer," Ushakov said.

Putin noted earlier this month that Moscow and Beijing have reached "a very substantial step forward in our cooperation in the oil and gas sector."

"Practically all the key issues have been agreed upon," he said. "If we succeed in finalizing these details and bringing them to a conclusion during this visit, I will be extremely pleased."

Putin also praised their bilateral relationship as a crucial, balancing force in international relations.

"Interaction between such nations as China and Russia undoubtedly serves as a factor of deterrence and stability," he said.

Moscow welcomes China's dialogue with the U.S. as another stabilizing element for the global economy, Putin added.

"We stand only to benefit from this, from the stability and constructive engagement between the U.S. and China," he said.

UK police investigate allegations of child sex abuse dating back to 1980s after Epstein file release

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Police in the UK say they are investigating two allegations of decades-old child sex abuse after looking into potential crimes revealed in documents from the U.S. Justice Department's investigation into the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Police in Surrey, the county immediately southwest of London, said in a statement Tuesday that they are investigating two separate allegations. One relates to locations in Surrey and Berkshire in the mid-1990s to 2000. The other relates to the mid- to late 1980s in West Surrey.

No arrests have been made.

"We take all reports of sexual offending seriously and will work to identify any reasonable lines of enquiry to verify information or establish corroborating evidence," police said in a statement.

Surrey is among several U.K. police forces that have worked together to assess potential crimes revealed in documents linked to the late financier and sex offender. The National Police Chiefs' Council, which brings together police leaders from across the U.K., said in February that it had set up a national coordination group to support forces looking into issues arising from the more than 3 million pages of documents released earlier this year.

While the council didn't specify the police forces involved in the effort, at least eight have said they are "assessing" information in the files. They are looking into issues ranging from concerns that Epstein's private jet may have been used in sex trafficking to allegations that the former Prince Andrew sent confidential reports to the financier when he was Britain's international trade envoy.

The Epstein scandal has rocked the royal family and British politics in recent months because of his links to Peter Mandelson, the U.K.'s former ambassador to Washington, and to the former prince, now known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor.

King Charles III in October stripped his younger brother of his royal titles, including the right to be called a prince, in an effort to insulate the royal family from the continuing revelations about his friendship with Epstein.

Palestinians in Gaza mark anniversary of 1948 mass uprooting and say today's catastrophe is worse

By JULIA FRANKEL and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Blink and you might miss the few stone walls that are all that's left of the village that Yusuf Abu Hamam's family was forced to flee when he was an infant in 1948.

The village, al-Joura, was demolished by the Israeli military at the time. It has since vanished under neighborhoods of the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon and the grounds of a national park.

The neighborhood where Abu Hamam's family ended up — and where he spent most of his life — now lies also largely in ruins. Buildings in the Shati Camp in the northern Gaza Strip have been razed and wrecked by Israeli bombardment and demolitions during the past 2½ years of war.

On Friday, Abu Hamam and millions of Palestinians mark the 78th anniversary of the Nakba, Arabic for "catastrophe," referring to the mass expulsion and flight of some 750,000 Palestinians from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It's the third commemoration of the Nakba since the war in Gaza began.

The 78-year-old Abu Hamam, one of a dwindling number of Nakba survivors, says the current war is an even greater catastrophe.

Israel's military has pushed deep into Gaza, now controlling 60% of the territory, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday, during a Jerusalem Day celebration.

"Today it is 60%, tomorrow we will see, tomorrow we will see," he told a cheering crowd in Jerusalem.

More than six months after an October ceasefire, Gaza's more than 2 million people are now crammed into less than half of the 25-mile-long strip along the Mediterranean coast, surrounded by the Israeli-controlled zone.

"There is no country left," Abu Hamam said, speaking next to his home, which was heavily damaged by Israeli shelling earlier in the war. "A square kilometer and a half extending from the sea, this is what we are living in ... It's indescribable, unbearable."

What was the Nakba?

For Palestinians, the Nakba meant the loss of most of their homeland. Some 80% of the Palestinians who lived in the area that became Israel were driven from their homes by forces of the nascent state before and during the war. The fighting began when Arab armies attacked following Israel's establishment as a home for Jews in the wake of the Holocaust. Palestinians who remained behind hold Israeli citizenship.

After the war, Israel refused to allow Palestinian refugees to return to ensure a Jewish majority within its borders. Palestinians became a seemingly permanent refugee community that now numbers some 6 million, with most living in refugee camps in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Gaza.

Around 530 Palestinian villages in what became Israel were destroyed, according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics.

Abu Hamam's birth village was one of them. Al-Joura was seized by the Israeli military as it advanced against Egyptian forces in November 1948. Soldiers were ordered to destroy every home in al-Joura and neighboring villages to ensure their Palestinian populations couldn't come back, according to military archives cited by Israeli historian Benny Morris.

Refugees swelled the population of the tiny patch of territory along the southern coast that became the Gaza Strip. They stayed in tent camps, run by a newly created U.N. agency for Palestinians, UNRWA, which provided aid and schooling. Those camps, like Abu Hamam's Shati Camp, grew into dense urban neighborhoods over the decades, before many were flattened during the latest Gaza war by Israeli bombardment.

In Gaza, Palestinians say they live a new Nakba

The ancestors of Ne'man Abu Jarad and his wife, Majida, were already living in what would become the Gaza Strip in 1948. They both recall stories from their families about refugees streaming in by foot from areas further north, like the village Abu Hamam came from.

Though they avoided the original Nakba, there was no escaping from what Majida now calls "our Nakba."

Their hometown has been wiped off the map. Over the past year, Israeli bulldozers and controlled deto-

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nations have razed nearly every building in the northern Gaza towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun. A new Israeli military base stands about 700 meters (765 yards) from where the Abu Jarads' house once stood, according to satellite photos.

Also gone is the southern Gaza city of Rafah, once home to a quarter million people, and other villages and neighborhoods located in the Israeli-held half of the Gaza Strip. The military says it is destroying positions used by Hamas and preparing the area for reconstruction. Satellite photos show nearly every structure reduced to rubble.

Over the last 31 months of war, the Abu Jarads and their six daughters have been displaced more than a dozen times as they fled Israeli bombardment and offensives. They currently live in a camp in the southern city of Khan Younis. Their tent offers little shelter from biting winter winds or summer heat, Majida said.

Their daughters have been out of school for over two years now.

"The Nakba of '48, I don't think it can be compared to our Nakba," Majida said. "In '48, they say people were displaced once and settled in one place, and they are still there until now. But our Nakba, honestly, is more severe because our displacement has happened multiple times. There is no stability."

Around 90% of Gaza's more than 2 million people have lost their homes, according to U.N. estimates, with most of them now sheltering in huge tent camps with rat infestations and pools of sewage. They are dependent on aid to survive.

Israel's offensive has killed over 72,700 Palestinians, according to local health officials. It was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people. Militants also abducted 251 hostages.

In the northern West Bank, tens of thousands of Palestinians are entering their 15th month of displacement, after the Israeli military ordered them out of their refugee camps as it launched an operation it said was targeting militant groups.

Since then, troops have demolished or heavily damaged at least 850 structures across the refugee camps of Nur Shams, Jenin and Tulkarem, according to an analysis of satellite imagery by Human Rights Watch released in December.

Saving what was lost, again and again

The 1948 Nakba also brought the loss of Palestinians' history, as those fleeing struggled to keep hold of the documents and possessions tying them to their homes.

One of the largest archives of Palestinian documents dating back to the Nakba belongs to UNRWA.

UNRWA staff members, who fled their offices in Gaza after Israel ordered the north evacuated, had to leave behind the agency's extensive archive.

The staff then launched a mission to rescue the most crucial documents — birth, death and marriage certificates and refugee registration cards, according to Juliette Touma, a former senior UNRWA official.

Without those documents, Palestinians could lose their rights and refugee status. Staffers crammed their personal suitcases full of papers and carried them through checkpoints and out of the territory, Touma said.

The current war has cost Palestinians in Gaza what little remained of their personal histories. Majida's parents' home in Beit Hanoun was destroyed, and with it family photos.

"There is nothing left," she said.

Abu Hamam, too, says everything has been lost.

"When this war came, it devoured trees, stones and people," he said. "Entire families were erased from the civil registry. Hundreds of families are still buried under the rubble."

A de-extinction company has hatched live chicks from an artificial eggshell

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A biotech company that aims to resurrect lost creatures said Tuesday it has hatched live chicks in an artificial environment — a development that was met with mixed reviews from scientists and critics of its de-extinction mission.

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Twenty-six baby chickens — ranging from a few days to several months old — were born from a 3D printed lattice structure that mimics an eggshell, according to Colossal Biosciences.

Colossal previously announced it had genetically engineered living animals to resemble extinct species, including mice with long hair like the woolly mammoth and wolf pups that take after dire wolves.

Colossal's CEO Ben Lamm said the artificial egg technology could one day be scaled up to genetically tweak living birds to resemble New Zealand's extinct South Island giant moa, whose eggs are 80 times the size of a chicken's and would be difficult for any modern bird to lay.

"We wanted to build something that nature has done a pretty good job of developing and make it better and scalable and even more efficient," Lamm said.

Independent scientists say the technology, while impressive, lacks some components to be truly considered an artificial egg. And they said the idea of reviving extinct beasts is likely impossible.

"They might be able to use this technology to help them make a genetically modified bird, but that's just a genetically modified bird. It's not a moa," said evolutionary biologist Vincent Lynch with the University at Buffalo.

To hatch the chicks, Colossal scientists poured fertilized eggs into the artificial system and placed them in an incubator. They also added calcium, which is normally absorbed from the eggshell, and imaged the embryos' development and growth in real-time.

Scientists say Colossal has designed an artificial eggshell with a membrane that allows the right amount of oxygen to get in, just like a real egg. But other components of an egg — like temporary organs that form to nourish and stabilize the growing chick and remove waste — weren't included.

"That's not an artificial egg because you've poured in all the other parts that make it an egg. It's an artificial eggshell," said Lynch.

In decades past, researchers have used cruder technology to create transparent eggshells that hatched chicks from plastic films or sacks. Such technologies are useful to study chicken development and glean insights that can also be applied to other mammals and even humans.

"Producing a chick from an artificial vessel is not necessarily new," said Nicola Hemmings, who studies bird reproductive biology at the University of Sheffield. Hemmings is not part of the Colossal team.

There's a long road ahead before Colossal attempts a moa resurrection using this artificial egg system. Scientists first need to compare ancient DNA from well-preserved moa bones to genomes of living bird species. And they need a bigger eggshell.

"We didn't want to wait till we were ready to birth a giant moa. We actually wanted to start working on the engineering challenges for surrogacy and birth now," Lamm said.

Even if Colossal succeeds in creating a tall bird similar to the moa, some scientists are concerned about what happens after — including how it would survive in a landscape that looks nothing like that past.

"The big challenge is, what environment is this animal going to live in?" said bioethicist Arthur Caplan with New York University's Grossman School of Medicine.

Such de-extinction efforts may make more sense with currently endangered species, where scientists could preserve sperm and egg cells from living members to attempt to bring more back, Hemmings said.

"My personal interests lie more in preserving what we've got than trying to bring back what is already gone," Hemmings said.

OpenAI avoided a costly court loss to Elon Musk, but neither side is unscathed

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — After prevailing in its court fight with Elon Musk, OpenAI — the ChatGPT maker valued at \$852 billion — remains on track for what could be one of the largest initial public offerings in history.

Musk had been seeking the ouster of his fellow OpenAI co-founder, CEO Sam Altman, among other changes to the company. But with testimony from witnesses who called Altman dishonest, he's hardly

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emerged unscathed.

At a time of growing concern about artificial intelligence's impacts, the landmark trial also shed new light on the flaws and outsize ambitions of the small number of billionaires steering the development of the breakthrough technology.

The trial was a reminder, said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute, "of how much the future of AI still depends on a remarkably small group of powerful tech figures and their personal rivalries."

"The trial highlighted not just a dispute between Musk and Altman, but a broader disconnect between the people building these systems and many of the people increasingly expected to live and work alongside them," Kreps said.

Musk had accused OpenAI, Altman and his top lieutenant Greg Brockman of betraying a shared vision for it to remain a nonprofit dedicated to guiding AI's development for the good of humanity. Altman, in turn, accused Musk of trying to hobble the ChatGPT maker for the benefit of his own AI company.

On Monday, the nine-person federal jury in Oakland, California, found that Musk waited too long to file his lawsuit and missed a statutory deadline. After a three-week trial that included hundreds of pieces of evidence and some of tech's biggest names on the stand, the jury deliberated less than two hours before returning a verdict essentially on a technicality.

Musk said he will appeal and called Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who oversaw the trial, a "terrible activist Oakland judge, who simply used the jury as a fig leaf" to create a bad precedent. "She just handed out a free license to loot charities if you can keep the looting quiet for a few years!" Musk wrote on his social media platform X.

It was the second major courtroom loss for Musk in less than two months.

Gonzalez Rogers made it clear early on in the trial that she did not want it to become a debate over AI's dangers. But the unresolved questions about the risks AI poses for job losses, mental health issues and even humanity's extinction served as a backdrop for the proceedings, with protesters decrying both Musk and Altman becoming a regular presence outside the federal courthouse.

Demonstrators' signs declared the real losers were regular people whose lives are being upended by an industry controlled by out-of-touch billionaires who can't get along.

"This is a funny microcosm of this moment where we have this hugely important technology that's being developed by for-profit corporations run by people like Musk and Altman and not as the part of some government-led initiative," said Columbia Law School professor Dorothy Lund.

The trial laid bare some of Silicon Valley's messy inner workings, with emails, diary entries and sometimes embarrassing text message exchanges shown as evidence. Texts between Altman and a former OpenAI executive became meme fodder and the subject of parody songs.

The trial shed light on Altman's removal from the OpenAI board in 2023, before he returned to his role a few days later. Several witnesses including two ex-board members, Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley, said there were concerns about Altman's truthfulness.

Throughout the trial, OpenAI brushed off Musk's allegations of betrayal as an unfounded case of sour grapes aimed at undercutting the company's rapid growth and bolstering Musk's own artificial intelligence company, xAI, which is now part of SpaceX.

Both Musk's SpaceX and OpenAI are planning massive initial public offerings, as is Anthropic, which was formed by a group of seven ex-OpenAI leaders.

"It's a lot of dirty laundry that doesn't look very appealing, I suppose, and so that may hurt their reputation and may have downstream effects on all kinds of things that you can't even anticipate," said University of Richmond Law School professor Carl Tobias. "But you know, AI is likely to come forward and continue even if it isn't OpenAI."

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Today in History: May 20, Lincoln signs Homestead Act

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, May 20, the 140th day of 2026. There are 225 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 20, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which was intended to encourage settlement west of the Mississippi River by making federal land available for private ownership and farming. About 10% of the land area of the United States (270 million acres, or 1.1 million square km) would be privatized by 1934.

Also on this date:

In 1861, North Carolina seceded from the Union, becoming the 10th state to join the Confederacy early in the American Civil War.

In 1873, Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis obtained a U.S. patent for putting rivets in men's work pants to prevent wear and tear, leading to the large-scale production of denim blue jeans.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh took off from Long Island, New York, aboard the Spirit of St. Louis on his historic solo flight to Paris, France. He completed the first solo, nonstop transatlantic flight of more than 3,600 miles (5,800 kilometers) in just over 33 hours.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart departed from Newfoundland to become the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. (Because of weather and equipment problems, Earhart landed the following day in Northern Ireland instead of her intended destination, France.)

In 1948, Chiang Kai-shek was elected as the first president of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

In 1956, the United States exploded the first airborne hydrogen bomb over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.

In 1961, a white mob attacked a bus carrying Freedom Riders in Montgomery, Alabama, prompting the federal government to send in U.S. Marshals to restore order.

In 1969, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces captured Ap Bia Mountain, referred to as "Hamburger Hill" by the Americans, following one of the bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War.

In 1985, Radio Marti, operated by the U.S. government, began broadcasting Spanish-language news into Cuba. Cuba responded by attempting to jam its signal.

In 2013, a fierce EF5 tornado plowed through the Oklahoma City suburb of Moore, killing 24 people.

In 2015, four of the world's biggest banks — JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup's banking unit Citicorp, Barclays and the Royal Bank of Scotland — agreed to plead guilty to rigging the currency markets and pay more than \$5 billion in penalties.

Today's Birthdays: Japanese baseball star Sadaharu Oh is 86. Singer-actor Cher is 80. Actor-comedian Dave Thomas is 77. Republican Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho is 75. Political commentator Ron Reagan is 68. Musician Jane Wiedlin (The Go-Go's) is 68. Actor Bronson Pinchot is 67. TV personality Ted Allen is 61. Actor Mindy Cohn is 60. Actor Timothy Olyphant is 58. Former racing driver Tony Stewart is 55. Rapper Busta Rhymes is 54. Actor Matt Czuchy (zoo-KREE') is 49. Actor-singer Naturi Naughton is 42. Cyclist Chris Froome is 41. Country musician Jon Pardi is 41. Singer Omar Apollo is 29. Soccer player Trinity Rodman is 24. Rapper Luh Kel is 24.