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Newsweek

The Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

The US-Israel War With Iran Is Tearing Iraq Apart

Iraq feels like a friend stuck in the middle of a fight it didn't start. As the U.S. and Israel square off against Iran, Baghdad is being pulled in every direction—by militias, by foreign powers, by neighbors losing patience.

For ordinary Iraqis, it's déjà vu: another round of instability, another reminder that their country is treated less like a sovereign state and more like a chessboard.

At the center of this storm is Ali al-Zaidi, Iraq's new prime minister. He is facing mounting pressure from Washington to take tougher steps in routing the influence of militias—and by extension, Tehran, which has high stakes in Iraq's future as well.

Meanwhile, concerns over an escalation are mounting as negotiations remain deadlocked. Trump has announced his decision to skip the wedding of his son, Donald Jr., this weekend, citing "circumstances pertaining to the Government" and his "love for the United States of America."

Should the U.S. resume large-scale strikes against Iran, the crisis becomes all the more critical for Iraq.

How UK Would Respond if Russia Attacked Baltics

Estonia's military said this month that Russia could be ready to launch a war as early as next year. Now, NATO countries are racing against time to build up their ammunition stockpiles, beef up their militaries and get enough air defense systems in place to intercept Russian missiles and drones before the Kremlin feels confident enough to rain them down as part of an invasion attempt.

Trump's Approval Rating Collapses With Rural Americans

Trump's approval rating among rural Americans—historically one of his strongest constituencies—has slipped into negative territory for the first time since early 2025 in a national polling series.

'Decimated' CDC Could Struggle in Face of Ebola Outbreak

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been left "decimated" by various policy changes over the last year, weakening its ability to respond to a growing Ebola outbreak, experts have told Newsweek.

Republicans Grapple With Trump Victory Over Thomas Massie

Trump's success in forcing out Kentucky congressman Thomas Massie exposed a party caught between two incompatible electorates. Trump-aligned primary voters demand ideological purity and unwavering loyalty. General election voters in competitive districts often reject it.

World in Brief

Will King Charles' monarchy survive? King Charles III has been under pressure in recent years, including stemming from the scandal surrounding Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, prompting renewed debate about whether it could ultimately contribute to calls for Britain to abolish the monarchy.

Strong magnitude earthquake strikes off Hawaii: A strong magnitude six earthquake has hit Hawaii, with locals reporting shaking across the Big Island and surrounding regions.

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Trump admin expands visa pause: The U.S. State Department confirmed Friday that it was expanding its Ebola-related visa pause, as health officials continue to struggle to bring the outbreak in parts of Africa under control.

Trump posts doctored video: President Donald Trump has shared an AI-generated video depicting Stephen Colbert being thrown into the trash, just one day after the late-night host's final show aired.

Staten Island shipyard fire: A fire and explosion at a Staten Island shipyard on Friday killed one person and injured more than 30, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said in a press conference.



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MEMORIAL DAY

★ HONORING ALL WHO SERVED ★

GROTON POST #39 MEMORIAL DAY SCHEDULE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★	7:30 A.M.	HUFTON
🏆	8:15 A.M.	JAMES
🏆	8:45 A.M.	VERDON
🏆	9:15 A.M.	BATES-SCOTLAND
🏆	10:00 A.M.	FERNEY
+	11:00 A.M.	ANDOVER CATHOLIC

GROTON AT NOON

★ ★ GUEST SPEAKER ★ ★
AARON WALBERG,
THE BROWN COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
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Lipp retires from Groton Area

by Dorene Nelson



After eighteen and a half years as a Paraprofessional at Groton Elementary, Kami Lipp has decided to retire. "I started as a SPED para and ended up loving it," she admitted. "I had no intention of staying until retirement, but here I am!"

"I am a para in three different areas - Reading, Math, and Keyboarding," Lipp listed. "On a daily basis I work with first through fourth graders in Reading RTI. I also help first, second, and third grade students in Math RTI, as well as with second graders through fifth in Keyboarding."

"On an average day, I work with around 125 elementary students," she said. "Some of these classes and individuals were more challenging than others, requiring me to be well prepared."

"The most difficult job involved in being a Paraprofessional," Lipp explained, "is making sure that the RTI class plans are tailored to the specific group I am working with. In addition to that, I have to adjust between working with first graders and then with second, third, fourth, or fifth graders. That's quite a wide range of age and ability."

"The paraprofessional job has many great moments too," she smiled. "One that I particularly like are the 'lightbulb moments' when the students in which I'm helping grasp the job required for the assignment. Creating bonds with the students is also important and very rewarding."

"My husband, Tom and I, have five children and four grandchildren. I have no specific retirement plans at this time, but I do think that I'll be quite busy with our growing family."

Gilbert wanted one more chance to qualify for state. She got it.

Ryelle Gilbert wanted one more opportunity to qualify for the state track meet — and she made the most of it.

Gilbert entered the week sitting in 31st place statewide in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:28.26. Hoping for one final chance to move into the top 24 and earn a state berth, she competed Friday at the Last Chance Track Meet in Arlington.

After being given approval to attend, Gilbert needed transportation to the meet. Her grandfather, Gene Loeschke, stepped in and drove her to Arlington, where she competed as the lone Groton Area athlete.

Gilbert responded with one of her best performances of the season, placing second in the 800-meter run with a season-best time of 2:25.21. According to the latest update released Saturday morning by the SDHSAA, Gilbert moved into 19th place statewide, officially qualifying for the State Track and Field Meet.

Also, in Friday's story about Groton Area state qualifiers, the girls' sprint medley relay team should have been included. The relay team currently sits in 13th place statewide with a qualifying time of 4:24.48, set May 2.

Final state qualifiers are expected to be announced shortly. The State Track and Field Meet will be held Thursday through Saturday at Howard Wood Dakota Relays in Sioux Falls.

Hubbart Named SDATA Athletic Trainer of the Year

South Dakota Athletic Trainers' Association (SDATA) has named Brittany Hubbart as its 2026 Athletic Trainer of the Year, recognizing her outstanding contributions to athletic training and her continued dedication to student-athletes across South Dakota.

Hubbart currently serves as a Sanford Orthopedics & Sports Medicine certified athletic trainer covering Groton Area School District athletics. According to the SDATA, Hubbart has made "remarkable contributions to advancing athletic training in the State of South Dakota," while demonstrating leadership that continues to inspire others and help shape the future of the profession.

The South Dakota Athletic Trainers' Association is a professional organization representing certified athletic trainers throughout the state. Through its Honors and Awards program, the organization recognizes athletic trainers, athletes and others who have gone above and beyond in service to patients and the athletic training profession.

The Athletic Trainer of the Year award is presented to a certified and licensed athletic trainer in South Dakota who has demonstrated excellence and leadership in the field. Nominees must work as a certified athletic trainer in South Dakota and be members of the SDATA.

Hubbart's selection in 2026 marks a historic achievement. Since the award was established in 2002, she is the only individual to receive the honor twice. She previously earned the award in 2022 while serving at Presentation College.

Her list of honors also includes being named the 2021 Athletic Training Educator of the Year and receiving the 2020 Iron Will Award alongside athlete Haylee Biel and fellow athletic trainer Blake Spindler during her time at Presentation College.

Hubbart has become a familiar and valued presence on the sidelines for Groton High School athletics, helping provide care, injury prevention, rehabilitation and emergency response support for Tiger athletes throughout the school year.

The recognition highlights not only Hubbart's professional accomplishments, but also the important role athletic trainers play in helping keep athletes, coaches, spectators and patients safe.





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Board of Regents 'leaning in' to AI while planning to regulate its use at South Dakota universities

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER



South Dakota Board of Regents member Jeff Partridge participates in a meeting in December 2023 at Brookings. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

South Dakota universities are "leaning in" to artificial intelligence, state Board of Regents President Jeff Partridge said at a Wednesday meeting in Custer.

The system that oversees the state's public universities plans to formulate regulations for AI use throughout 2026 and 2027, focusing on how the technology should be governed; how to teach students, faculty and staff to use it; and how to implement it into curriculum and research.

Board members said the plan will help prepare students to use AI ethically and effectively once they graduate.

"We want to lead in this area with our students," Partridge said. "We're excited for them to be career-ready, AI prepared and technology prepared."

Starting this summer, the Board of Regents plans to implement a "systemwide strategy" to use AI, spokeswoman Shuree Mortenson said in an emailed statement.

The board's information technology team will work with a committee to select "a systemwide technology solution to be implemented and utilized across the system," according to the document presented on Wednesday.

AI is already being used at the campus level within the system, Mortenson added. South Dakota State University launched an AI center this spring. President Barry Dunn said during a town hall last month that different approaches to AI use by universities could create educational disparities in the state.

The systemwide strategy isn't about "taking over" the work that specific schools have done, Mortenson said, but rather "making it work together better over time."

"As part of this plan, the system will look at where using shared tools or solutions would be a good idea, especially when there are advantages in terms of how much it costs, how secure it is, or how consistent it is," Mortenson said.

The system plans to build the underlying infrastructure this summer — such as security, data management and design — and roll out tools to users in the fall. No final decisions have been made, Mortenson said.

The plan also calls for a pilot program this fall using "agentic AI" — technology that can act independently, such as with scheduling and processing forms — to reduce administrative workload.

Rules governing AI use across the system — covering data privacy, ethical guardrails and alignment with the university system's mission — will be recommended to the board by its October meeting.

Each campus will use its existing teaching support center to train faculty on using AI in the classroom and handling students' AI use in coursework. AI is expected to be integrated into curriculum by fall 2027, based on recommendations from the system's academic affairs council at the Board's December meeting.

Board members acknowledged hesitancy among faculty and students. No one spoke against the plan at the meeting, though Partridge acknowledged the use of AI "in some areas" makes board members

“uncomfortable” as well.

“You just kind of want to do it right and you want to be very engaged, but at the same time we’re moving forward,” Partridge said.

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

COMMENTARY

South Dakota’s water quality reports grow more polished and less honest

Problem began with merger of state’s agriculture and environmental departments
by Brad Johnson

South Dakota didn’t stop polluting its water. It stopped talking honestly about what’s polluting it.

In 2018, the state’s own water quality report plainly identified the causes fouling South Dakota rivers and lakes: livestock waste, manure runoff, cropland erosion, nutrient loading and failing septic systems. Agriculture was identified as the primary source of surface water pollution, and the report said so directly.

That wasn’t partisan. It wasn’t controversial. It was the state’s own science.

By 2026, the pollution remains. But plainspoken honesty has steadily disappeared.

Across the 2018, 2022, and 2026 reports, one thing changes: the language. The pollutants remain. The impaired waters remain. What disappears is the state’s willingness to say what’s causing the damage.

The turning point came on Jan. 19, 2021, when the Department of Agriculture absorbed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources under then-Gov. Kristi Noem’s government reorganization.

The merger was sold as efficiency — a “one-stop shop” for producers. Then-Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden said it would “unleash the next generation of agriculture.”

What it created was an agency responsible both for promoting agriculture and communicating with the public about pollution tied to it. That is not a minor administrative tweak. It is a built-in conflict of interest — one that determines what gets highlighted, what gets buried, and what quietly disappears from public view.

The reports themselves tell the story.

In 2018, DENR’s final report spoke plainly. It described nonpoint source pollution as the state’s “most serious and pervasive water quality problem” and directly connected impaired streams and rivers to livestock waste, manure runoff, cropland erosion, nutrient loading and failing septic systems.

The state treated residents like adults: Here is what’s in the water, here are the sources, here is what we’re doing about it.

By 2022, the tone shifted. Pollutants remained, but discussion of their causes slid deeper into the docu-



A shallow area near the shore of Lake Mitchell on May 4, 2024. (Photo by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

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ment. Executive messaging shifted toward Environmental Protection Agency "Vision" priorities, scheduling of total maximum daily loads (known as TMDLs, which are the amounts of pollutants waterbodies can receive and still meet safe standards for designated uses), and bureaucratic process. Agriculture's role was still present but no longer clear and no longer emphasized.

The report read increasingly like something written to minimize political friction, not inform the public. This year, much of the plain language is gone.

The report tells us 77% of assessed stream miles and 73% of assessed lake acres fail to meet standards. It lists pollutants such as E. coli and mercury. But the discussion of the sources driving those impairments is now far harder for the public to find — and in many cases, simply not there.

Language once describing nonpoint pollution as the state's dominant water quality threat is gone. References to livestock waste, cropland erosion, nutrient loading and failing septic systems — long understood as central challenges in South Dakota water quality — have been quietly removed from public emphasis.

The water didn't get cleaner. The reporting got safer for the people in charge.

Some call this modernization: dashboards, graphics, interactive tools, "user-friendly" design. But when public reporting becomes more polished while growing less candid about cause and responsibility, that is not modernization. It is political risk-management disguised as transparency.

South Dakotans deserve better than percentages stripped of explanation.

Communities living with algae-choked lakes, E. coli advisories, beach closures, and rivers that run brown after every storm do not need curated graphics to tell them something is wrong. Producers investing in better grazing systems, manure management and conservation practices know it, too.

Plain reporting does not attack agriculture. It acknowledges reality and respects the people already trying to improve it.

But truth becomes politically inconvenient when the agency authoring the report is institutionally aligned with the very industry contributing most heavily to the pollution.

That is not modernization. It is a retreat from public trust, and a deliberate narrowing of what the public is encouraged to notice.

We see what happens after hard rains and spring floods. We see creeks turn the color of soil and lakes bloom green. The land speaks plainly. The water speaks plainly. Government reporting should, too.

The next governor will inherit a system that has grown more polished and less honest. The next governor should not be allowed to dodge the question: Will South Dakota return to clear, independent reporting about the sources of water pollution, or will the state continue managing the issue through euphemism, omission and politically convenient silence?

This is no longer just about water quality. It is about whether residents are being told the truth about the condition of the state they call home, or whether political considerations shape public communications.

Clean water policy begins with direct public accounting. Without that, accountability disappears long before the pollution does.

Pollution doesn't vanish when the reporting does, and no amount of political messaging can clean a river or a lake.

South Dakotans can manage the truth about their water. The question is whether their government — and the next administration — will choose transparency over political comfort.

Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.

Woman killed by bison in South Dakota's Custer State Park, weeks after another visitor was injured

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR



A bull bison grazes in South Dakota's Custer State Park in 2023. (Photo by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

A 70-year-old Canadian woman died after being struck by a bison Monday while hiking with her husband in South Dakota's Custer State Park, after another park visitor was injured by a bison earlier this month.

The couple were on the Grace Coolidge Trail and found themselves behind a group of about five bull bison, according to the Custer County Sheriff's Office. The couple paused about 500 yards from the animals and waited for them to continue up the trail and out of sight. The couple then continued hiking, came around a corner and encountered the bulls at a distance of 50 yards.

The couple stopped again, and then continued trailing the bison as the animals moved away. A bull eventually broke from the group, charged the woman, hooked her and tossed her into the air.

The woman died from her injuries.

Custer State Park is managed by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Spokesperson Nick Harrington said staff moved the bison from the area and are monitoring the animal's behavior "to ensure public safety and prevent future incidents." He said dry conditions have caused bison to spread throughout the park in search of grass, increasing the chance that visitors may encounter them on trails.

Harrington said park visitors should keep their distance from wildlife, make noise while hiking, use caution around corners and ridges, and keep pets on leashes.

"It's important to remember that bison are wild animals and need to be treated as such," Harrington said in a written statement. "Visitors are reminded to keep their distance from all wild animals and safely enjoy both the trails and wildlife within the park."

On May 1, a 22-year-old hiker encountered a bison while hiking the Lost Trails by Center Lake, Harrington said in response to South Dakota Searchlight questions about prior incidents. The hiker was with a friend and their dog when they rounded a corner.

"The hiker was struck by the buffalo on the back of her legs and was transported to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries," Harrington said.

Harrington said the department is not aware of any other incidents involving bison within Custer State Park this year, and there had not been a fatal incident involving a bison in the park since 2001.

The 110-square-mile park in the Black Hills is home to a herd of about 1,400 bison, also known as buffalo. Bull bison can stand up to 7 feet tall at the shoulders, weigh 2,000 pounds and run up to 35 mph, according to the department.

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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.

Trump says Kevin Warsh will be 'totally independent' as he's sworn in as Fed chair

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Kevin Warsh assumed his new role as chair of the Federal Reserve Friday after a swearing-in ceremony in the White House East Room, where U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas delivered the oath of office.

President Donald Trump said before a crowd of high-profile former and current lawmakers and officials that he wants Warsh, of Florida, to be "totally independent."

"I want him to be independent and just do a great job. Don't look at me, don't look at anybody, just do your own thing and do a great job," Trump said.

Warsh vowed to be a "reform-oriented" leader in brief remarks after he was sworn in as the 17th Fed chair by Thomas. Warsh's wife, Jane Lauder, held a Bible for him.

"Our mandate at the Fed is to promote price stability and maximum employment. When we pursue those aims with wisdom and clarity, independence and resolve, inflation can be lower, growth stronger, real take-home pay higher, and America can be more prosperous, and no less important, America's place in the world more secure," said Warsh, who previously served as a Fed board governor during the 2008 global financial crisis.

Also at the ceremony was Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, whom Warsh worked with at the White House during President George W. Bush's administration.



Kevin Warsh, left, takes the oath of office from U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, right, as Warsh's wife Jane Lauder looks on during his swearing-in ceremony to be the new chairman of the Federal Reserve in the East Room of the White House on May 22, 2026 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Anna

Moneymaker/Getty Images)

Trump attacks on Powell

Warsh's swearing-in ceremony caps Trump's long campaign of public attacks on former Fed Chair Jerome Powell, appointed by the president during his first term in 2018.

Trump ramped up threats over the past year to fire and replace Powell if he did not lower interest rates.

With the November midterms less than six months away, Trump is increasingly facing economic headwinds as inflation hit its highest mark last month since 2023, and the president's approval ratings on the cost of living continue to sag.

Trump's feud with Powell reached a boiling point in January when the Department of Justice opened a criminal probe into Powell and the central bank over the multibillion-dollar cost to renovate the Fed's Washington, D.C., headquarters. After being subpoenaed, Powell issued a rare public video statement dismissing the investigation as a maneuver to weaken the Fed's independence.

Trump's investigation into Powell marred his nomination of Warsh, even within his own party. The retiring U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., withheld his key committee vote to advance Warsh's nomination to the Senate until the Department of Justice announced in late April it would drop the probe.

Just over a month prior to the administration nixing the case, a federal judge had blocked the DOJ's

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criminal subpoenas, citing "abundant evidence that the subpoenas' dominant (if not sole) purpose is to harass and pressure Powell either to yield to the President or to resign and make way for a Fed Chair."

Trump is also tangled in litigation after attempting to fire Federal Reserve Gov. Lisa Cook. The Supreme Court is reviewing whether Trump overstepped his presidential authority when he fired her without cause.

'Sock puppet'

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, the top Democrat on the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, issued a scathing statement Friday morning questioning Warsh's transparency about his investments during the nomination process, and alleging he will not remain independent from the president.

"Kevin Warsh starts his tenure with his credibility in tatters. Having proven himself to be Donald Trump's sock puppet, I worry Mr. Warsh will prioritize the President's political interests over the economic well-being of American families," said Warren, D-Mass.

Powell will stay on as a member of the Fed's board of governors.

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

Supreme Court ruling robs Native Americans of 'silent partner' in legislative redistricting

South Dakota won't redraw its districts until 2031, but advocates are already worried

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that gutted a key provision of a voting rights law won't affect South Dakota's legislative districts until 2031 — but Native American voting rights advocates aren't waiting to worry.

The decision in *Louisiana v. Calais* dismantled guardrails protecting the electoral power of Black, Hispanic and other racial minority voters enshrined in the Voting Rights Act, a 1965 law barring racial discrimination in voting.

The 6-3 decision effectively nullified a provision called Section 2, which had required states to draw electoral maps giving racial minorities a fair chance to elect their preferred candidates.

Greg Lembrich, legal director for Four Directions, a South Dakota-based Native American voting rights advocacy organization, is concerned about the ruling.

"It's a layer of protection that's now been taken down by the U.S. Supreme Court and makes it that



Historical South Dakota newspaper headlines reflect the importance of the Voting Rights Act, which influenced the boundaries of legislative districts in the state. South Dakota Native American lawmakers have included (top, from left) Richard "Dick" Hagen, Troy Heinert, Red Dawn Foster, Tom Van Norman, Theresa Two Bulls, (bottom, from left) John "Pat" Flynn, Edward Iron Cloud III, Peri Pourier, Kevin Killer and Tom Shortbull. (Photos courtesy of Legislative Research Council; Illustration by Joshua

Haier/South Dakota Searchlight)

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much easier to deprive minority voters of the full weight of their voting rights,” Lembrich said, “and a lot harder for voters with diluted voting rights to challenge those decisions in court.”

South Dakota has a strained relationship with the federal law. Some of the state’s redistricting changes in the last 50 years stem from requirements enforced at the federal level — and a majority of Native Americans who’ve earned seats in the Legislature have been elected from districts influenced by the law.

What the ruling means for South Dakota

The Supreme Court ruling has already set off redistricting battles in some states that have multiple members of the U.S. House of Representatives. That won’t happen in South Dakota, where the state’s small population entitles it to only one member of the House.

But the Legislature is required by the state constitution to redraw its districts every 10 years after the census. When that happens next in 2031, advocates will lose the legal tools they used to create and defend Native-majority districts. Under the old Section 2 standard, a map could be challenged by showing it had a discriminatory effect — even without proving intent. Now, challengers must prove lawmakers deliberately discriminated.

“It’s very hard to prove intentional discrimination,” Lembrich said. “People who are doing something to intentionally discriminate usually don’t admit that’s what they’re doing.”

In South Dakota, Section 2 caused the creation of split districts — single districts divided into subdistricts, each electing one state House member, with both sharing one at-large state senator. Districts 26 and 28, which include the Rosebud, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock reservations, are split districts.

The structure gives Native American voters the power to elect a candidate of their choice without stripping non-Native voters of the same opportunity, Lembrich said. District 27, which includes the Pine Ridge Reservation, has a majority Native American voting population.

Former Republican lawmaker Jim Bolin, who represented the Canton area, served on the 2011 and 2021 redistricting committees — both of which produced district maps that avoided litigation. He said lawmakers on the committees in both years went “out of their way” to include Native American voters and “ensure the Native American population would be able to win an election.”

In 2011, the Legislature expanded District 26 to include the Crow Creek and Lower Brule reservations.

In 2021, the Legislature consolidated a large urban Native population in northern Rapid City into one district rather than splitting it, and a Democrat was elected from District 32 for the first time in 18 years. The Legislature also expanded District 26 to follow Crow Creek reservation lines rather than county lines, and the voting population for Native-heavy districts was kept lower to avoid diluting Native voters.

Lembrich isn’t sure legislative leaders will feel compelled to redraw those districts dramatically in 2031. Although many of the Native Americans who have been elected to the Legislature have been Democrats, Republicans currently hold 97 of the Legislature’s 105 positions.

“Republicans consistently have a super majority in both chambers,” Lembrich said. “They don’t need the extra seats. It may not be worth the PR and the lawsuits of trying to change it.”

Bolin expects lawmakers will consider eliminating split districts from a “consistency standpoint.” But the decision will depend on lawmakers elected in 2030.

“You could have a totally different group of people in the Legislature with a completely different viewpoint on how this should be handled,” Bolin said.

OJ Semans, co-executive director of Four Directions and a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, plans to keep an eye on 2031 redistricting.

“We know that if there is equal access, the turnout in Indian Country is going to improve,” Semans said. “Every time we turn around, there’s a new barrier to figure out how we’ll get by this.”

A fraught history

The Voting Rights Act didn’t directly affect South Dakota until 1975, when Shannon (now Oglala Lakota)

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and Todd counties, home to the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, became subject to Section 5 of the law.

Section 5 required the approval of the federal Department of Justice before any election or voting-related changes were made to jurisdictions that fell under its purview because of a history of voter discrimination. While that section still stands, the Supreme Court effectively nullified it in its 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

Bill Janklow, who was serving as the state's attorney general, called the law a "facial absurdity" that was "plaguing" the state. Under federal pressure, South Dakota created its first majority-Native American legislative district in 1981. Native Americans made up about 86% of the district's voting population.

The new district, which included Shannon and Todd counties, sent two Native American lawmakers to the House: Tom Shortbull and Dick Hagen, believed to be the first Native American lawmakers living on a reservation at the time of their election, according to The Associated Press. Paula Valandra was elected to the Senate from that district in 1990.

The Legislature created its first split district in 1991, District 28, "to protect minority voting rights," state law says, for Native American and tribal members of the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Sioux tribes.

The Legislature then tried to dismantle its own reform by eliminating the split district, but a federal court struck down that action. Native American lawyer and lawmaker Tom Van Norman was elected from District 28A in 2000.

The Legislature then packed Native American voters into District 27 in 2001 — making it one of the most populated districts in the state, with 90% of its voting-age population being Native American — while neighboring District 26's voting-age population dropped to about 30% Native American.

By 2005, a federal court found the 2001 map violated Section 2 and Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The federal district court drew its own map, affirmed by the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in 2006. Those court-ordered districts — 26A and B, 27 and 28A and B — remain the structural foundation of Native American representation in the Legislature today.

Bolin said the Voting Rights Act was a "silent partner in the room" in 2011 and 2021 redistricting.

"There was a strong feeling on the part of the Legislature that they didn't want to get sued again," Bolin said.

Native American representation in the statehouse

One of South Dakota's first Native American lawmakers was not a result of the Voting Rights Act.

John P. "Pat" Flynn, a Rosebud tribal member, was the first Native American elected to the state Senate, according to his son Sean Flynn, who is a history professor at Dakota Wesleyan University and wrote his father's biography. The Republican was elected in 1970 to represent District 25, which included Gregory, Tripp and Todd counties.

Pat survived 82 combat missions and was a prisoner in the Korean War before returning to Gregory County, where he became "a bit of a legend," Sean said, respected by Native and non-Native residents alike.

"For him to run for office and really represent an unrepresented population at that time, that hadn't had a voice in District 25, was important to him," Sean said.

Sean said districts with majority-Native voting populations allow Native candidates a platform beyond being seen as a "one trick pony" concerned only with tribal issues.

"Someday, there is going to be an American Indian governor of South Dakota, and that person just might get their opportunity because of legislative districts formed under the Voting Rights Act," Sean said. "They'll not just represent American Indians, but they're here to represent the broader public."

Former lawmaker Ron Volesky is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe who ran for governor in the 2002 Democratic primary. First elected as a Republican in 1981 to represent the Huron-area District 21, he served alongside lawmakers elected in districts influenced by the Voting Rights Act and said those relationships helped him "be a better legislator."

Volesky was born on the Standing Rock Reservation, but was adopted as a child and grew up in Huron.

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"It was very important for me to understand people who come from those types of environments, how they view certain issues, what their values and cultural norms are," Volesky said. "I think that was not only important for me, but very important for the non-Native legislators."

The Voting Rights Act's impact extends beyond Native lawmakers, Lembrich said. It also helped elect non-Native lawmakers who drew wide support from Native voters, such as Democrats Larry Lucas of Mission, within the Rosebud Reservation, and Oren Lesmeister of Parade, within the Cheyenne River Reservation.

The Voting Rights Act has helped "foster a culture of political leadership" in tribal and rural areas, Volesky added, citing examples of Native American lawmakers elected from reservations.

"It had a profound effect on the Native political movement and growth in South Dakota," Volesky said. "Without that, you may have had a Pat Flynn, you may have had a Ron Volesky, but you would not have had a Shortbull or Hagen or Van Norman or Valandra. You just wouldn't."

Native American lawmakers

South Dakota state lawmakers of Native American descent have included the following, with the district they last served, tribal affiliation and years of service:

John P. "Pat" Flynn, D25, Rosebud, 1971-1972
Ron Volesky, D21, Standing Rock, 1981-2002
Richard "Dick" Hagen, D27, Oglala, 1983-2002
Tom Shortbull, D27, Oglala, 1983-1988
Jim Emery, D30, Cheyenne River, 1985-1996
Paul Valandra, D28, Rosebud, 1991-2006
Tom Van Norman, D28A, Cheyenne River, 2001-2008
Michael LaPointe, D27, Rosebud, 2003-2004
Theresa Two Bulls, D27, Oglala, 2005-2008
Edward Iron Cloud III, D27, Oglala, 2009-2012
Kevin Killer, D27, Oglala, 2009-2018
Chuck Jones, D8, Flandreau, 2013-2014
Troy Heinert, D26, Rosebud, 2013-2022
Shawn Bordeaux, D26, Rosebud, 2015-2024
Steve Livermont, D27, Oglala, 2017-2020
Tamara St. John, D1, Sisseton Wahpeton, 2017-2020
Red Dawn Foster, D27, Oglala, 2019-present
Peri Pourier, D27, Oglala, 2019-present
Will Mortenson, D24, Cheyenne River, 2021-present
Joe Donnell, D1, Sisseton Wahpeton, 2023-2024
Tyler Tordsen, D14, Sisseton Wahpeton, 2023-2024
Eric Emery, D26A, Rosebud, 2023-present
Tamara Grove, D26, Unenrolled Native of Cherokee Tribe, 2025-present

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

How governor candidate Dusty Johnson says he would 'strike the right balance' on data centers

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN



U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson participates in a Republican gubernatorial primary debate on April 13, 2026, at the South Dakota Public Broadcasting studio in Sioux Falls. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

JOHNSON: Well, right now, unless something changes, South Dakota is not going to get any large data centers. Jon Hansen and Larry Rhoden during the legislative session clearly didn't strike the right balance. The one facility that was thinking about coming to South Dakota, to Deuel County, has left. I suspect they're going to build right across the state border in Minnesota. To the extent that there are concerns about the use on the electric grid, well, they're going to be using the same electric grid, just not on our side of the state line. The taxes that the data centers will pay, they will go to St. Paul and to the Minnesota counties rather than to Pierre and to the South Dakota counties.

O'BRIEN: Welcome to a special episode of the Searchlight Report, a podcast from South Dakota Searchlight. I'm your host, Meghan O'Brien. I sat down for an interview with each of the Republicans seeking their party's nomination for governor in the June 2nd primary election. I asked each of them the same set of questions. In this series of episodes, you'll

hear more from each candidate about their goals for state policy on abortion, data centers and economic development, among other topics. I also asked each candidate to share their big idea for South Dakota. You just heard from U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson. He lives in Mitchell and is serving his fourth term in the U.S. House of Representatives. Johnson previously worked as an executive at Vantage Point Solutions, a telecommunications engineering and consulting firm. He also previously served as chief of staff to Governor Dennis Daugaard, and as an elected public utilities commissioner.

O'BRIEN: This past legislative session, there'd been a focus on abortion legislation, including restriction restricting abortion medications from entering the state, and defining what abortion procedure is. Abortion is already illegal in the state except to preserve for the life of the mother. Do you see the need for further abortion regulations, or legislation, and what would that look like?

JOHNSON: Well, I do think when you're talking about the abortion pill, that is still, that's not an area that our country has fully litigated yet. And I mean, I've talked to these mothers who are, they're in crisis. My heart absolutely goes out to them, and it's an area where I think we want to have tremendous compassion for everyone involved. Just to take a step back. I mean, I believe that the life within a womb is life and that it's worthy of protection, as all life is. You know, my wife and I, we had a child die during pregnancy, and I think that was quite an eye-opener. I was pro-life before that. But I think that sort of deepened my emotional connection to the idea that that is, that's a life. I mean, we cried for days and weeks, and we didn't cry like that because we'd lost, you know, just a collection of cells. I mean, we'd lost a child. And so I do think that although South Dakota is proudly pro-life and and our current legislative environment is among the most pro-life in the country, I certainly wouldn't want any erosion of that.

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And I think, particularly around the abortion pill space, we want to make sure we continue to do right by protecting children and mothers.

O'BRIEN: Property tax reduction for all homeowners kind of dominated the legislative conversation this year. But some bills were aimed at promoting or expanding programs that give relief to people who are veterans, people who are part of the elderly or disabled populations. Would you as governor want to increase the amount of South Dakotans that are taking advantage of those programs? And what would that promotion or expansion look like?

JOHNSON: Yeah, there was some property tax relief during the legislative session. I mean, I've got real concerns about how that was structured. I mean, particularly the Rhoden plan that Jon Hansen also supported, that is going to be a massive redistribution of wealth from our rural counties to the biggest homes in the biggest counties. And I just think that could have been structured in a way that would have been fairer. And my biggest complaint is just that they raised the sales tax three different times. We continue to be told that that was for property tax relief. That's not the case. Of the 1.8% increase that may be increased, based on to what extent it's fully implemented, 1%, or more than half of the 1.8%, is not connected to property tax relief at all. So, I do think there is some additional space to analyze what populations were not well served by what Rhoden and Hansen did, and how do we try to really make the playing field a little fairer for folks. We've got some relief, as you noted, for seniors. I think there's some room, particularly on that front, to maybe expand what we're able to offer.

O'BRIEN: Would that look like changing, maybe income limitations or expanding the amount of people who would be able to qualify for those kinds of programs?

JOHNSON: Yeah, sure, those would certainly be things that we want to discuss and consider. You know, the most important thing is just to make sure that there aren't unintended consequences. You know, property taxes don't go to the state. Property taxes go to our schools, they go to law enforcement, public safety, at the county level. And so we just want to make sure that whatever relief we provide, we're not in any way undermining education or public safety.

O'BRIEN: More than 1,000 Medicaid enrollees in South Dakota could lose coverage once the federal work requirements take place next year, and that's according to the state's Department of Social Services. What do you plan to do about those changes?

JOHNSON: Yeah, well, one thing: We wanna make sure we're being clear and honest about the work requirements around Medicaid. People who are veterans, people who are enrolled members, live on reservations, people who have young children at home, people who are pregnant, people who have disabilities, people who are seniors or people who are minors — none of them are impacted by the work requirements, which are not only work requirements. It's for work, or training, or education, or volunteering. And these are not dissimilar from the work requirements that we've already had in South Dakota, longstanding work requirements, around TANF and around food stamps, also called SNAP. And so I think part of our question is just to back up and say, OK, well, who are these 1,000 able-bodied young people without dependents or disabilities, who are on TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, but don't have an opportunity to, or aren't interested in volunteering, working or education. And, you know, it may be that there are some unique circumstances that we want to make sure we're treating with empathy. A number of the work requirements around these welfare programs do give the state flexibility within their portfolio to provide some exemptions and relief. And if we find that the federal rules aren't working for somebody whose situation is entirely meritorious, then I think we're going to have an opportunity to have a state-federal conversation about some waivers on that front.

O'BRIEN: What do you think that the state's role in economic development should be, and if elected, how do you plan to establish or continue that role?

JOHNSON: Yeah, I do think we need to have a better focus on entrepreneurship, South Dakota business founders, people who are coming up with great ideas. So many of the stories that we have pride around in South Dakota came from those founding families. You know, Daktronics came from, you know, Kurtenbachs and others. I think about even just in Mitchell, my town, how many great jobs and and prosperity has been created by, you know, Tessiers or the Muths or the Thomsens. These are just wonderful stories.

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And so, I'm less interested in smokestack chasing than I am in making sure that we have a tax environment and a regulatory environment that is conducive to making sure that those business startups can succeed. That was really at the heart of my Launch South Dakota plan. I think it's bringing our outdated — some experts have said antiquated — approach at the current Governor's Office of Economic Development and really bringing it up to to the modern day where we can make sure that we are not nervous about decisions that are getting made in boardrooms in New York or Beijing, but we're focused on founders that are making decisions in Rapid City and Redfield and Martin, Mission, Mitchell, and elsewhere.

O'BRIEN: A lot of recently enacted laws in South Dakota could make it harder to vote, including new requirements for proof of citizenship when registering, and a new way to challenge a person's ability to vote. What policies would you pursue on voting access?

JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, the federal rules are not dissimilar from what South Dakota has had for a long time. I've been a little disappointed at the nature of the rhetoric. You know, the idea, you know, when we have passed, like the SAVE America Act out of the House, which I'm a big proponent of, there have been allegations that, you know, women and people of color can't manage a photo ID. That hasn't been my experience at all. In South Dakota, we've required a photo ID to vote for decades and I think the reality is my wife and so many women that I know were able to make sure that they were able to get a Real ID-compliant driver license, which required the same type of legal paperwork. I mean, these are not helpless victims. I mean, these are South Dakotans who are comfortable using an ID to get a hotel room, pick up tickets at will call, you know, buy a six pack of beer, get on an airplane. So, I think I would push back a bit on the premise of your question, insofar as so many of these provisions are very similar to what we've had in South Dakota for decades, and I think in South Dakota, our elections are well run.

O'BRIEN: When you look at some of the opposition to that, some of that is that it's already illegal to vote in South Dakota if you're not a U.S. citizen and setting up those requirements when you're going in to register to vote to have a birth certificate or that proof of citizenship can kind of, set up another burden for folks who are going in to register to vote. I guess I'm just curious to know your response to that kind of criticism of that law.

JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, South Dakota has Real ID-compliant driver licenses, so that birth certificate is already required or or other paperwork that would be based upon that birth certificate, other things that show citizenship, in effect. So, I find those arguments without merit, and that's already the kind of thing that you have to do in any state to have a Real ID-compliant driver license.

O'BRIEN: OK, so then moving on to regulations for data centers, that was also a pretty big conversation in the Legislature this year. There were some regulations on the table for state lawmakers. How do you plan to regulate them if you're elected?

JOHNSON: Well, right now, unless something changes, South Dakota is not going to get any large data centers. Jon Hansen and Larry Rhoden during the legislative session clearly didn't strike the right balance. The one facility that was thinking about coming to South Dakota, to Deuel County, has left. I suspect they're going to build right across the state border in Minnesota. To the extent that there are concerns about the use on the electric grid, well, they're going to be using the same electric grid, just not on our side of the state line. The taxes that the data centers will pay, they will go to St. Paul and to the Minnesota counties rather than to Pierre and to the South Dakota counties. What we know is that there's a lot of misinformation around data centers. Clearly, you can have projects that are poorly done. Not every corner is the right corner for a data center, in the right way that not every corner is the right corner for a cemetery or a convenience store, right? I mean, we have to do these things in the right way. We know that in Loudoun County, Virginia, although data centers make up just a tiny, tiny fraction of the land use, they're now paying more than half of the property taxes, giving, you know, folks a real tax break. That would have happened in Deuel County. We know that the project that was proposed was going to pay \$5 million a year in property taxes. All of the property taxes paid to Deuel County today are only \$11 million. That would have been a transformational opportunity to be able to reduce the property taxes of folks in Deuel County, and improve the schools, and improve the roads. It just would have been remarkable. But

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again, that project was chased out of state. In North Dakota, they have been as welcoming of data centers the last three years as probably any state. And we've seen that their electric rates have come down in the last three years, more than any other state's electric rates have come down. Because again, if you do projects right, it can pay real dividends. That was at the heart of my Data Centers Done right initiative, whereby I would just say as governor, we're not going to be welcoming data centers to South Dakota, unless it is approved on a project by project basis that, A) They're not going to hurt our electric rates, B) they're not going to hurt our water, C) that they are going to create good jobs, and D) that they're going to pay millions and millions of dollars in taxes, reducing the tax burden for the rest of us.

O'BRIEN: The western part of the state has seen significantly less snow this winter, and multiple wildfires have burned through thousands of acres in western counties. What role does the state play in making positive changes when it comes to climate change and environmental disaster? And how would you, if elected, make those changes?

JOHNSON: Well, there, I mean, first off, we, I mean, we want to be honest. I mean, state government is not in a position to affect the climate, and certainly not the weather. And so this is a lot about adaptation. And making sure that, you know, our agricultural producers, our foresters, other companies and families are able to deal with the fact that there are times, in the past, and unfortunately in the future, where we're going to have profound drought. And there'll be other times we have too much rain, and both of those can cause substantial real-world problems. And so, when I was chief of staff to Governor Daugaard, I worked closely with our mitigation efforts on both drought and flooding. And I think by and large, the existing state resources are probably sufficient to deal with what we are expected to see. But I think that's where leadership also comes in, that if you just get the sense that the needs of the state are not being met by the available resources, then we've got to sit down and figure out at the state, local and federal level, how do we do a better job of addressing those challenges?

O'BRIEN: Where do you think that the state's relationship stands with tribal nations in the state, and how would you plan to continue or develop those relationships?

JOHNSON: Well, I mean, these tribal leaders, we work together on a regular basis. I mean, these are friends. I mean, I have, you know, Ryman LeBeau's cellphone number. He's got mine. I mean, I've got Frank Star Comes Out's cellphone, he's got mine. And so, I would say our working relationship is exceptional, and in fact, in the last Congress, I was rated the number one most effective congressional office on tribal affairs. We spent a lot of time very effectively working with the tribes to get things done, actually get things done out here in D.C. And we have, to a remarkable degree, in the tribal education space, in the transportation space and the tribal law enforcement space, and I think those really, really substantial past results, I think are pretty indicative of future performance. But, at its heart, it's about collaboration. It's about knowing these men and women. In fact, I was just texting with Janet Alkire this morning. She's the immediate past chair of Standing Rock, and even though she's not in office anymore, you know, she and I are still talking about the issues that affect Standing Rock on both the North Dakota and South Dakota side of the line.

O'BRIEN: About half of the existing inmates in the state end up returning to prison within three years of their release. How will you as governor work to redirect those inmates?

JOHNSON: Yeah, it's one of the most striking failures of, you know, Governor Rhoden's time in office. We just, for 15 months, we have had state's attorneys, sheriffs, mayors, police chiefs telling his team, in some instances on a weekly basis, that repeat offenders were getting too many bites at the apple, and we know that this is, other states are doing way better than we are. We have the third worst recidivism rate in the country. You're right, half of our folks that are released from prison go on to commit another crime, that's breaking into another car, selling meth to another kid. It was not this bad five and 10 years ago. This is a lot about a lack of accountability. There are just not, there are not enough consequences for bad behavior. And the governor just rolled out a new plan, I don't know, last week, I suppose. And I know that the law enforcement officials that I talked to are saying that's just too little or too late. I mean, 30 days away from an election is not the time to find religion on this issue, Governor, that we've been

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telling you about for, you know, 15 or 16 months. And I think that's why the Fraternal Order of Police last week endorsed me. These line-level law enforcement officers, they don't often do endorsements, and I think it's probably unprecedented in the state for them to endorse against an incumbent, but they're really, really frustrated. And, you know, the other week in Rapid City, in a single night, on Monday night, you had seven folks under state supervision get picked up by the Rapid City Police. And I get it that we've, you know, the governor's got a plan now, but it just, it shouldn't take 15 months of problems and a Sioux Falls police officer getting shot before we get some leadership out of Pierre.

O'BRIEN: OK, so then what I guess, just as a follow up, what kind of steps do you see yourself taking then as governor to work alongside those local law enforcement agents?

JOHNSON: Yeah, so I've released the Safer South Dakota plan, developed with, you know, great experts in South Dakota like State's Attorney Daniel Hagggar, Sheriff Kevin Thom, other folks have consulted on it. Sheriff Fred Lamphere, former Secretary of Corrections Danny Kaemingk. At its heart are revising the consequence matrix, the accountability matrixes that are used in parole, making sure that when people do make mistakes, that they are more quickly violated. Using data to try to determine what folks, I mean, is the earned time process within the prison walls working properly? There are times where we will let somebody out of prison who has not flatted their time, they're not out of the time they've been sentenced to. We're letting them out, in essence, early, but then we're sending the local law enforcement agents in that community a higher risk offender notice, that we're releasing somebody who's a high risk into their community. Why are we letting these people out early? And so I think reviewing that earned time system is going to be really important. And then making sure that we're doing a better job of programming inside the walls. You know, the governor has said now a couple of times that, oh, we'll get better programming once this new prison is done in 2030. And that was part of the deal that was cut. He got people to agree to a new \$650 million prison, which I was supportive of. But part of the deal was that we were going to have all of this new programming. And the one bill during the legislative session that would have brought new programming in was defeated. Jon Hanson and Larry Rhoden did not deliver on that promise. And the governor said, well, we've got until 2030 to address this issue. We really don't. I mean, again, we have the third worst recidivism rate in America. And so, the programming we have today is not sufficient, and I am frustrated by the lack of urgency we have. So, I would make sure that on top of those other policy changes I talked about, that we would have some, we would have urgency about bringing new substance abuse, training or treatment, more vocational training within the walls, and then we would also restore the work program for, you know, low and medium inmates.

O'BRIEN: And when we look back at past governors, some have had some pretty defining impacts on South Dakota. Peter Norbeck founded Custer State Park. George Mickelson had his year of reconciliation to strengthen relationships between the state and Native Americans. Bill Janklow used prison inmates to wire the state's K through 12 buildings and university buildings for internet access, all that kind of among other accomplishments. But what is your big specific idea for South Dakota's future?

JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, certainly the three that I've been talking about most is, is number one, addressing this public safety crisis that that unfortunately, the administration in Pierre has really created. And I do think that is, I think we can be a leader, nationally, on doing the right thing. Number 2, we know that the states like Mississippi and Alabama have made huge leaps forward in K-12 education. A majority of school kids in South Dakota can't read at grade level. And we have seen with Alabama, they went from 49th in literacy to ninth. In Alabama, we saw they went from 52nd in math to 38th. It's harder to make gains in math than it is in literacy, but Alabama did it. And we're capable of everything Mississippi and Alabama are capable of, other than the fact that they had bold leaders like Governor Tate Reeves in Mississippi who brought forth a bold plan to get it done. We don't see that kind of bold planning in the last couple of years in state government, and that would certainly be the second idea for me. And then the third really would make sure that we become a business friendly state again. So many of us assume that we are the most business-friendly state in America, because one time, CNBC did have us ranked number 1. We're no longer ranked number 1. We're ranked 35th out of 50 states. It's been a rather precipitous dropoff, and that's one reason I rolled out my Launch South Dakota plan, is how do we make sure that

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we're doing right by those entrepreneurs, so that this can be a place where frankly, my sons Max, 21, Ben, 18, Owen, 14, have economic opportunities and that they can afford the kind of future they deserve.

O'BRIEN: As a final question, is there anything else that you want the voters of South Dakota to know?

JOHNSON: Well, I think it's easy for people to make promises. I think the benefit they have with me is that they've seen me deliver. I mean, I was chief of staff to Governor Daugaard, and helped to cut \$127 million of state spending, really unprecedented in our state's history. In the private sector, I created jobs very successfully as a co-owner of Vantage Point Solutions. And then here in Congress, I mean, I've worked with the president to secure the border. You know, we got rid of a lot of the programming within our agencies, and particularly within defense, that were maybe not focused on job number one, but were maybe sometimes more about driving a social agenda. And then the largest working families tax cut in American history. And so, I've made promises and I've kept them, and I think that should give South Dakotans good confidence that I'm capable of that kind of success in the governor's office.

O'BRIEN: Johnson is one of four Republican candidates running for governor. The Republican primary election is June 2nd, and early voting is underway. The winner of the Republican primary will advance to the November general election to face Democratic candidate Dan Ahlers.

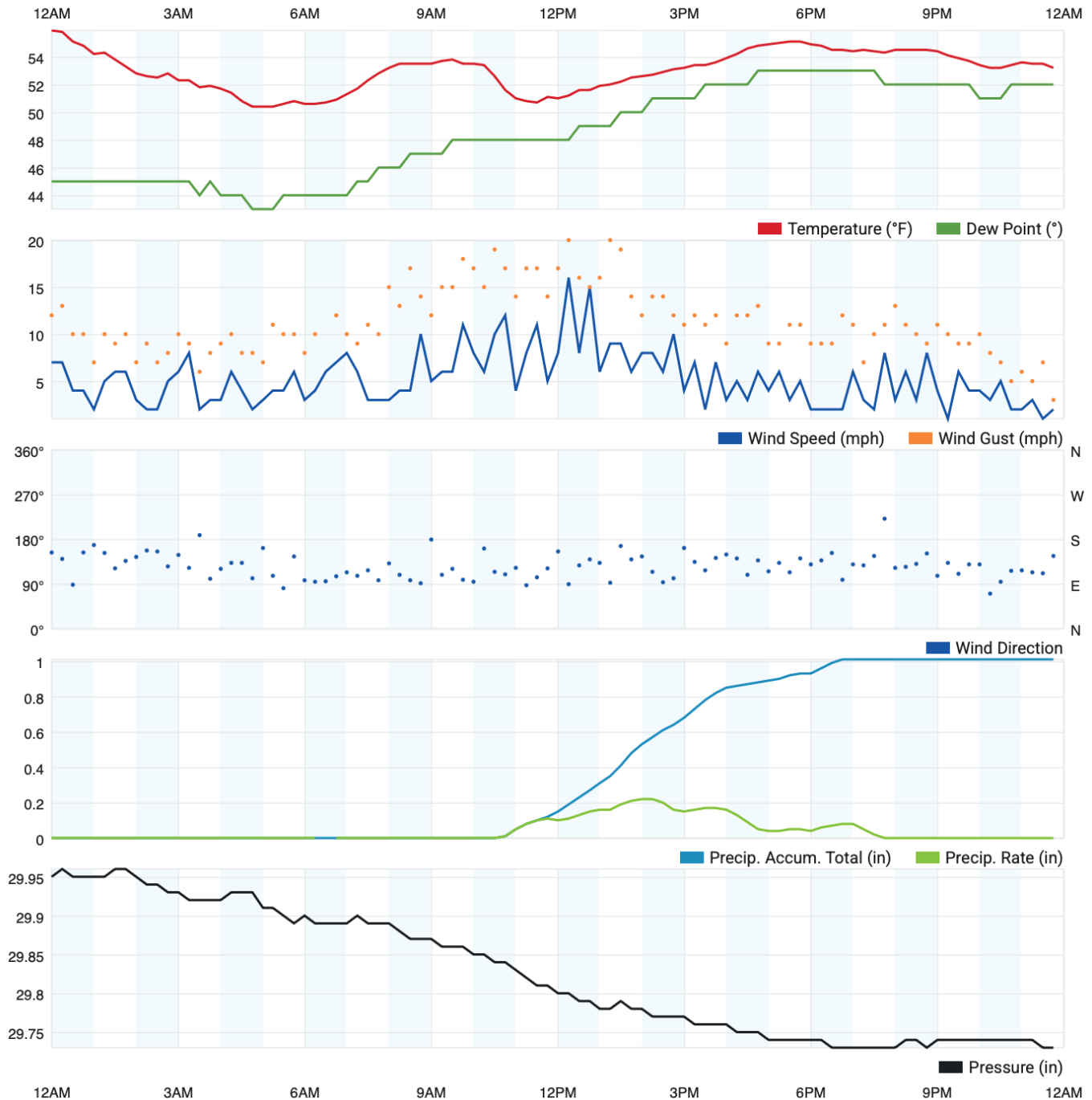
That's all we have for this episode of Searchlight Report. Audio for this episode of the podcast came from recordings by South Dakota Searchlight. The podcast is based on reporting by South Dakota Searchlight's staff — editor Seth Tupper, senior reporter John Hult and reporters Joshua Haiar, Makenzie Huber and me. I write the scripts and produce the audio, with editing by Seth Tupper. South Dakota Searchlight is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest nonprofit news organization. Until next time, I'm South Dakota Searchlight's Meghan O'Brien with the Searchlight Report.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 22, 2026



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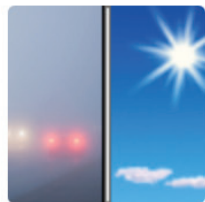
Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Memorial Day



High: 71 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny



Low: 44 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 82 °F

Sunny



Low: 50 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 91 °F

Hot

Warmer Weather on the Way

Today

Sunday

Monday



65 to 75°



76 to 84°



85 to 93°

Be on the lookout for patchy to areas
of dense fog this morning

May 23, 2026

3:55 AM



Patchy to areas of dense fog may continue into the morning hours today. Otherwise, warmer temperatures will move into the area, with highs reaching the 80s and 90s by Monday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 56 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 50 °F at 5:05 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 1:11 PM

Precip: : 1.01

Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 1950

Record Low: 26 in 1897

Average High: 73

Average Low: 47

Average Precip in May.: 2.51

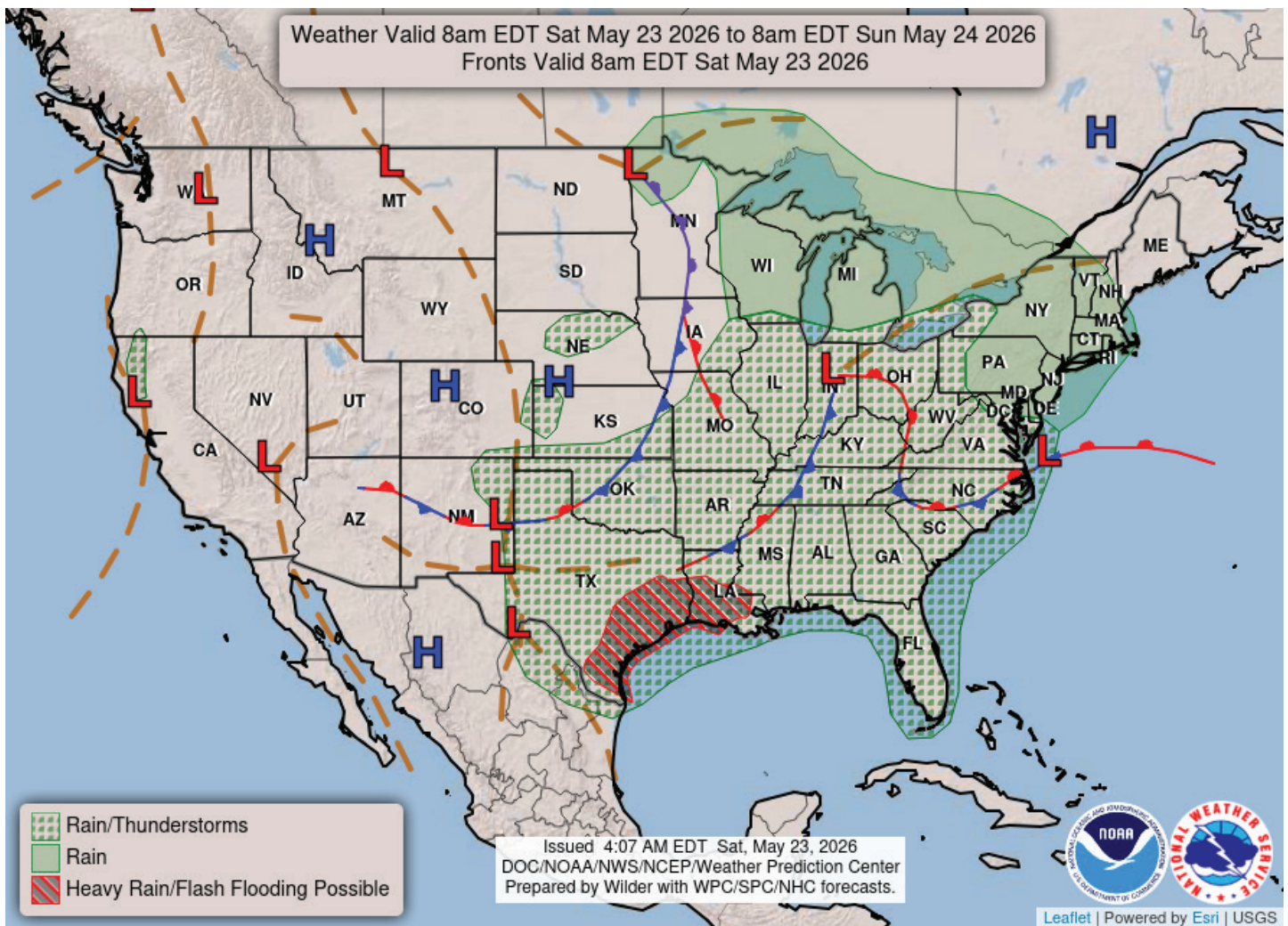
Precip to date in May.: 1.73

Average Precip to date: 6.48

Precip Year to Date: 4.85

Sunset Tonight: 9:04 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53 am



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Today in Weather History

May 23rd, 1989: A complex of thunderstorms moved from southwest Minnesota through Iowa. One small tornado touched down briefly in Lyon County. But the main story with this complex was high winds and hail. Baseball-sized hail fell north of George in Lyon County. Also, two-inch hail occurred in Sac County in Schaller and Odebolt, and golf-ball-sized hail fell in Carroll, Iowa. The hail caused damage to vehicles, trees, and roofs. Thunderstorm winds of 60 miles an hour were also common across all of northwest Iowa with these storms.

1882 — An unusual late season snow blanketed eastern Iowa, with four to six inches reported around Washington. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953 — The temperature at Hollis OK soared from a morning low of 70 degrees to an afternoon high of 110 degrees to establish a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — It was a busy day for thunderstorms in the central U.S. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Shreveport LA and golf ball size hail at Marfa, TX. Hobart, OK, received 3.55 inches of rain in the morning, and another 4.03 inches of rain that evening. Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced 8.5 inches of rain in two hours north of Potter, and 7.5 inches of rain in ninety minutes north of Minatare. Thunderstorms in Colorado produced five inches of hail at Greeley. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather across much of the eastern U.S. Golf ball size hail was reported in Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Ohio. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Severe thunderstorms developing along a cold front resulted in 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds in the Northern Plains and Upper Mississippi Valley. Golf ball size hail caused a million dollars damage around Buffalo City, WI, baseball size hail was reported at Northfield and Randolph, MN, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 95 mph at Dunkerton, IA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Unseasonably hot weather continued in the south central U.S. Pueblo, CO, equalled their May record with a high of 98 degrees, and the high of 106 degrees at Midland, TX, marked a record six straight days of 100 degree heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — A cold front crossing the western U.S. produced snow over parts of Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho and Utah, with five inches reported at Austin NV, and four inches at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon. Strong winds behind the cold front sharply reduced visibilities in blowing dust over central California, and two multi-vehicle accidents resulted in one death and eighteen injuries. In northern Idaho, a cloud-burst washed tons of topsoil, and rocks as large as footballs, into the valley town of Culdesac. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

When Storms Come

How do you respond when facing challenges?

Matthew 14:22-33: 22 Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.

23 After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

24 But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.

26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

28 Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

29 And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Storms are inevitable. In nature, powerful tempests leave a changed landscape behind them. Similarly, challenging circumstances can alter the topography of our life.

When difficulties arise, how do you respond? Do you say to the Lord, "I am doing what You asked, so why is this happening?" Such thinking assumes that being in the center of God's will exempts us from problems. In Matthew 14, we learn that Jesus instructed the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the opposite shore. While they were obeying Him, high winds and waves developed. Storms can arise even when we are exactly where God wants us to be (John 16:33).

Another question we sometimes ask is, "Father, what have I done wrong?" God does use trials to correct us, but not all situations come from our mistakes. He may allow troubles to perfect us—that is, to mature us and grow us into Christ's likeness.

God uses different things to train and equip us, because He wants each of His children to become a strong, vital servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Realize that nothing can happen to a believer unless God allows it. Instead of keeping our head bent low against the struggles of life, let's look up to the Lord and seek His purposes in our challenges.

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:

05.22.26

17 33 36 54 57 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 39 Mins 34
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.22.26

3 22 34 54 61 8

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$311,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.20.26

5 14 26 39 46 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$27,340,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 39 Mins 34
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.20.26

5 9 15 20 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$99,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 54 Mins 34
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.20.26

12 27 37 40 66 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 23 Mins 34
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.20.26

10 28 30 46 57 25

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$131,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 23 Mins 34
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Coal mine explosion in China kills 90 people, state media say

BEIJING (AP) — A gas explosion at a coal mine in China's northern Shanxi province killed at least 90 people, state media said on Saturday, in the country's deadliest mining accident in recent years.

The official Xinhua News Agency said the accident at Changzhi city's Liushenyu coal mine happened on Friday evening. Around 247 workers were on duty at the time.

Nine miners were still unaccounted for as of Saturday afternoon, Xinhua said, and more than 120 people were hospitalized.

The cause of the explosion was under investigation, Xinhua reported, and rescue work is pressing on with hundreds of rescuers and medical personnel sent to the site. Among the injured, many were hurt by toxic gas, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for an all-out effort to rescue the missing, Xinhua reported. Xi also called for the "proper handling of the aftermath of the accident and urged a thorough investigation into its cause, with accountability pursued in accordance with the law."

Xinhua later reported that those responsible for the company involved in the mine accident have been "placed under control," citing the local emergency management bureau.

Wang Yong, one of the hospitalized miners, told CCTV in a video interview that he smelled sulfur "like firecrackers" and saw smoke. "I told people to run," he said. "As I ran, I saw people being choked by the smoke. And then I blacked out."

The state broadcaster also reported that blueprints provided by the coal mine did not match the actual layout, hampering rescue efforts.

The coal mine, operated by the Shanxi Tongzhou Coal & Coke Group with an annual production capacity of 1.2 million tons, was placed on a national list of disaster-prone coal mines by China's National Mine Safety Administration in 2024 for having "high gas content."

Shanxi province is known as China's main coal mining province. With a size larger than Greece and a population of around 34 million, the province's hundreds of thousands of miners dug 1.3 billion tons of coal last year, or almost a third of China's total.

In China, coal remains a key energy source due to its lower cost and high availability, even as the country accelerates its transition toward green energy. Mining disasters have been common although authorities had implemented measures to improve safety over the past years.

In February 2023, 53 people were killed after a collapse at an open-pit mine in northern China's Inner Mongolia region. In November 2009, an explosion at a mine in northeastern China's Heilongjiang province killed 108, according to state media.

Ukrainian drone attack triggers fire at a Russian oil terminal

By The Associated Press undefined

A Ukrainian drone attack caused a fire at another Russian oil terminal overnight, local officials in Russia's Krasnodar region said Saturday, in what appeared to be the latest attack on Moscow's vital oil industry.

Authorities in the city of Novorossiysk said falling drone debris sparked a fire at an oil terminal, injuring two people, without naming the facility.

Russia's Astra news outlet said Ukrainian drones struck the Sheskhari oil terminal and depot, the terminus for Russian state-controlled pipeline company Transneft's main oil pipelines in the region. Images posted by Astra appeared to show smoke rising above the oil terminal, but they could not be verified. Ukraine did not immediately comment on the attack.

Ukraine has expanded its mid- and long-range strike capabilities, deploying drone and missile technology that it has developed domestically to battle Russia's 4-year-old invasion. Attacks on Russian oil assets that play a key part in funding the invasion have become almost daily occurrences.

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Meanwhile, the death toll from a Ukrainian drone strike overnight into Friday on a college dormitory building in Starobilsk, a city in Ukraine's Russia-occupied Luhansk region, rose to 12, Moscow-installed officials said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday denounced the attack on the dormitory as a "crime" and ordered the military to submit its proposals for retaliation. He said there were no military or law enforcement facilities near the college.

At a U.N. Security Council emergency meeting on the strike, held at the request of Russia, Ukrainian Ambassador Melnyk Andrii denied his Russian counterpart's accusations of war crimes, calling them a "pure propaganda show" and asserting that the May 22 operations "exclusively targeted the Russian war machine."

Progressives land a big win in a Philadelphia House primary and hope it means more are on the way

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — It looked like progressive Chris Rabb had a mountain to climb to win the Democratic nomination for a congressional district in Philadelphia.

The mayor and the city's Democratic Party had endorsed another candidate in this week's primary. So had members of Pennsylvania's delegation in the U.S. House. One Rabb rival was backed by millions of dollars. A second benefited from a get-out-the-vote operation run by the influential local building trades unions.

But Rabb finished 15 percentage points ahead of his closest competitor in Tuesday's election, and the state representative is likely on his way to Washington because no Republican sought the GOP nomination.

Rabb was propelled by a constellation of progressive groups, charting a path to victory partly by assailing his own party as listening more to donors than voters. He credited a grassroots movement inspired by New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, alarmed by Republican President Donald Trump and hungry for a government responsive to their needs.

"That was at the heart of why I was running and that is what I built my campaign around and that, I believe, is a chord we struck in this electorate that showed up and came out like gangbusters," Rabb said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The progressive left counts Rabb's success as one of its biggest victories of the year and the latest warning sign that Democratic voters see the party's leadership as weak and feckless in countering Trump. Progressives are also running for House seats in New York, California and Michigan where they are challenging Democratic incumbents or aiming to take on vulnerable Republicans.

Rabb, 55, is a self-described Democratic socialist and "proud troublemaker" who reliably supported the most progressive causes in the state House during his five terms. His backers said voters sent an important signal this week.

"They want someone who knows what they stand for and is ready to fight, whether it's fighting Donald Trump now or fighting an economy and political system rigged for billionaires in years ahead," said Adam Green, a co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee.

Progressives are finding their footing in midterms

Traction by progressives in midterm races has stoked concerns from moderates that far-left candidates will alienate middle-of-the-road voters and squander a politically advantageous year to unseat Republicans, retake control of Congress and block Trump's agenda during his last two years in office.

Mike Mikus, a Pittsburgh-based Democratic strategist, said progressives could be a problem down the road for the Democratic Party, but not this year.

"Regardless of who we nominate, gas prices are still too high, grocery prices are too high and people generally think the economy is not in a good place," Mikus said. "And voters will vote for change."

Perhaps Rabb's biggest supporter was the Working Families Party, which says the Democratic and Republican establishments have sold out to powerful interests. The organization has backed several members in Congress, and Analilia Mejía became the newest addition after winning a special election in New Jersey

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on April 16.

Rabb does not know what he might be able to expect in Washington. "Will we have a razor-thin majority? Will we be in a razor-thin minority?"

He sees Congress as a place where most are not willing to take bold steps because of money in politics. In his victory speech, Rabb showed the fire that his progressive backers say helped win over voters.

"I have been critiqued along this campaign for being too radical, too bold," Rabb told the crowd. "They ain't seen nothing yet."

Rabb's positions on many issues raised during the campaign were not dramatically different from his rivals', such as supporting Trump's impeachment, abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, imposing a moratorium on data centers or championing "Medicare for All."

He was distinct in stressing his support for government-run grocery stores — to wipe out "food deserts" — and an expansive minimum wage law that eliminates a lower tipped minimum wage and covers independent contractors such as gig workers.

Perhaps most notably, Rabb was a strident critic of establishment politics, including his own party's.

He said people are sick of insider politicians and big-donor politics. That leads to lackluster voter turnout, even while Trump is president and there is strong antipathy against "MAGA extremism and corporate greed," he said, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

"We can learn lessons from this victory because, if establishment politics was as effective and productive as people would have us think, then I would have been blown out of the water," Rabb said.

Campaign spending and surrogates

Sharif Street, a state senator and former state party chair, finished second on Tuesday. U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey and Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker campaigned for him and building trades unions kicked in more than \$600,000.

Dr. Ala Stanford was third, getting support from the retiring incumbent, Dwight Evans, and \$3.5 million in spending by 314 Action, a left-leaning political action committee aimed at electing scientists to Congress.

The state's most prominent Democrat, Gov. Josh Shapiro, did not endorse a candidate. He did call after the election to congratulate Rabb.

Rabb was boosted by at least \$1.8 million in spending help by allied progressive groups, according to federal campaign disclosures. U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., campaigned for him four days before the primary date.

Backers celebrated his triumph over the city party's "machine."

"The fact that Chris was able to win in machine territory is significant and should send a shock wave to the Democratic establishment that base voters are upset and want transformational change," said Joseph Geevarghese, executive director of Our Revolution, which was founded by U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

While progressive groups are making deeper inroads into Philadelphia, some Democrats pointed out that Rabb captured just 45% of the vote, meaning that perhaps a candidate with unified establishment backing could have prevailed. Others suggested Rabb was helped by a low-turnout election in which fewer than one-third of registered Democrats voted.

"Momentum, the vibes, how people feel about a candidate are going to make a difference," said Mustafa Rashed, a Democratic political consultant in Philadelphia.

Rabb said he almost didn't see the race to its conclusion and considered quitting after reporting his campaign treasurer for stealing money.

He felt such a sense of betrayal, combined with the stress of being outspent by his rivals, that he worried it would derail his candidacy.

"There was a lot of internal talk about what is the path forward for me," Rabb said. "I had to dig down and just reaffirm that I'm walking in my purpose and this is exactly what I'm supposed to be doing, irrespective of the adversities."

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Rubio arrives in India ahead of Quad talks as US tries to reset strained ties

NEW DELHI (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio arrived in India on Saturday ahead of a meeting next week with his counterparts from India, Australia, and Japan, members of the Indo-Pacific strategic alliance known as the Quad.

Rubio's first official trip to India comes as Washington seeks to stabilize relations with New Delhi after ties soured over President Donald Trump's tariff policies, which raised duties on several Indian exports.

Much of Rubio's four-day visit, however, will focus on a multicity tour, along with a gala reception in New Delhi marking the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence.

"There's a lot to work on with India, they're a great ally and partner. We do a lot of good work with them so this is an important trip," Rubio said ahead of his visit to India.

Rubio arrived in eastern city of Kolkata early Saturday and was scheduled to visit Mother House, the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa. In coming days, he will also visit northern cities of Agra and Jaipur, known for iconic monuments and palaces.

Later Saturday, Rubio called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and "shared U.S. perspective on various regional and global issues, including the situation in West Asia," a statement by Modi's office said. Modi reiterated India's support for peace efforts and stressed the need to resolve conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, it said.

Rubio briefed Modi on progress in bilateral cooperation across defense, strategic technologies, trade and investment, energy, connectivity, education and people-to-people ties, the statement added.

Sergio Gor, the U.S. ambassador in India, in a social media post said Rubio extended an invite to Modi on behalf of Trump to visit the White House in the near future. He said the meeting was productive and focused on ways to deepen U.S.-India cooperation in security, trade and critical technologies.

Rubio is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Sunday.

On Tuesday in New Delhi, Rubio will participate in the ministerial meeting of the Quad that has repeatedly accused China of flexing its military muscles in the South China Sea and aggressively pushing its maritime territorial claims.

Beijing maintains that its military is purely defensive to protect what it says are its sovereign rights and calls the Quad an attempt to contain its economic growth and influence.

After his inauguration in January last year, Rubio's first formal international engagement was meeting with the foreign ministers of the other Quad countries, both jointly and in separate sessions.

Pope Leo meets families of youth lost to illegal toxic waste dumping in Italy's 'Land of Fires'

By SILVIA STELLACCI Associated Press

ACERRA, Italy (AP) — Pope Leo XIV on Saturday greeted one by one families who lost loved ones to illegal toxic dumping in an area near Naples, as many paused to share photographs and other mementos of children and young people who have died or are battling cancer — illnesses tied to a multi-billion criminal racket run by the mafia.

Leo's visit to the so-called Terra dei Fuochi, or Land of Fires, came on the eve of the 11th anniversary of Pope Francis' big ecological encyclical Laudato Si (Praised Be), and indicates Leo's commitment to carry on his predecessor's environmental agenda.

"I have come first of all to gather the tears of those who have lost loved ones, killed by environmental pollution caused by unscrupulous people and organizations who for too long were able to act with impunity," Leo said in remarks to family members and local clergy inside Acerra's cathedral.

The pontiff recalled that the area now dubbed the Land of Fires was once called "Campania felix," Latin for blessed or fruitful countryside, "capable for enchanting for its fertility, its produce and its culture, like

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a hymn to life.

"And yet — here is death, of the land and of men," the pope said.

The European Court of Human Rights last year validated a generation of residents' complaints that mafia dumping, burial and burning of toxic waste led to an increased rate of cancer and other ailments in the area of 90 municipalities around Caserta and Naples, encompassing a population of 2.9 million people.

The court found Italian authorities had known since 1988 about the toxic pollution, blamed on the Camorra crime syndicate that controls waste disposal, but failed to take necessary steps to protect the residents. The binding ruling gave Italy two years to set up a database about the toxic waste and verified health risks associated with living there.

Bishop says the dumping continues

Bishop Antonio Di Donna in opening remarks estimated 150 young people had died in the city of some 58,000 over the past three decades — emphasizing that the number didn't take into account adults and victims in other municipalities.

He urged the pope to admonish those who continue to pollute, noting that the dumping of tons of toxic waste was reported a day earlier near Caserta. Di Donna said that Italian officials had identified dozens more human-caused contamination sites throughout the country, including the Venetian port of Marghera, and the leaching of PFAS forever chemicals into groundwater near Vicenza.

"We say to those brothers of ours ensnared in evil and seized by a mirage of fabulous earnings: Convert, change your ways, because what you are doing is not only a crime, it is a sin that cries out to God for vengeance," the bishop said.

The pope later greeted the mayors of the 90 communities impacted by the toxic dumping, and greeted thousands of people waving yellow flags and chanting "Papa Leone" along the route of his popemobile and in a central piazza.

Families of young victims appeal to the pope

The victims include Maria Venturato, who died of cancer in 2016 at the age of 25. Her father, Angelo, said he hopes to speak with the pope to explain their reality, "not for me ... for the next generation."

"I'd like to give these young people a future, so I'm asking for the pope's help with this. That is, I'm making a strong appeal to him to go to those in power and say, 'Look, let's heal this land of fires,'" he said on the eve of the pope's visit.

Inside the cathedral, Filomena Carolla presented the pope with a book containing memories from the life of her daughter, Tina De Angelis, who died of cancer at the age of 24.

"I'm just angry at the people who poisoned the soil, because what did our children have to do with it? What did they have to do with it, so young," Carolla told The Associated Press on Friday.

Francis' plans to visit the area in 2020 were canceled due to the pandemic.

40,000 people under evacuation orders for a chemical tank leak in Southern California

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ, CLAIRE RUSH and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

Authorities in Southern California on Friday were racing to figure out how to prevent the explosion of a storage tank that has been leaking a hazardous chemical used to make plastic parts, as some 40,000 people were under evacuation orders in the area.

A storage tank holding between 6,000 and 7,000 gallons (22,700 and 26,500 liters) of methyl methacrylate overheated Thursday and began venting vapors into the air at an aerospace plastics facility in Garden Grove, a city in Orange County, the local fire authority said.

The tank could fail and crack, releasing the chemical onto the ground, or it could explode, Orange County Fire Authority Division Chief Craig Covey said Friday.

"This thing is going to fail, and we don't know when," Covey said. "We're doing our best to figure out when or how we can prevent it."

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Officials ordered residents in Garden Grove to leave and expanded evacuation orders Friday to some residents of five other Orange County cities — Cypress, Stanton, Anaheim, Buena Park and Westminster — after being unable to stop the leak overnight on the tank at GKN Aerospace, which makes parts for commercial and military aircraft.

No injuries or deaths have been reported, authorities said.

In an update later Friday, Covey said authorities have been able to maintain the tank's temperature, buying time to figure out how to fix it.

Garden Grove is about 38 miles (61 kilometers) south of downtown Los Angeles and less than a mile from Disneyland's two theme parks, which were not under evacuation orders Friday. The city is known for its vibrant Vietnamese community, one of the largest of any U.S. city.

Danny Pham said he was deep in a dream when his roommate banged on his door around 7 a.m. Friday morning and told him he needed to leave immediately. Pham had been working late the night before at a Vietnamese restaurant and had not seen the news.

"It was shocking to me," said Pham, who lives only a couple blocks from the plastics plant. "I didn't know how serious it would be. I never knew that a thing like this could happen."

He left minutes later, grabbing only his wallet and passport, and took shelter at a friend's restaurant in a neighboring city.

By late Friday afternoon, Pham was still trying to figure out where he would stay the night and worrying that he had only the clothes on his back, possibly for days to come.

Covey said crews have created containment barriers with sandbags in case there is a chemical spill from the tank to prevent the toxic chemical from getting into storm drains or reaching creeks or the nearby ocean.

Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong, the county health officer, said if the chemical heats up, it can release a vapor that is harmful to people's health. It can cause respiratory issues, itching and burning eyes, nausea and headaches.

Crews were initially successful and were able to neutralize one of two damaged tanks, but Covey said they determined Friday morning that the remaining tank was "in the biggest crisis."

GKN Aerospace said specialized hazardous material teams are assessing the situation.

"There are no reports of injuries at this time and our priority remains the safety of our employees, responders, and the surrounding community," a spokesperson said in an emailed statement. "We will provide verified updates as soon as more information becomes available."

Kim Yen, a retiree in Garden Grove, was settling in for the night Thursday when she heard a sirenlike sound coming from her phone. An alert told her she needed to leave her home, which was just two blocks from the chemical leak.

As Yen drove to her daughter's house in Seal Beach, she worried that others in the local Vietnamese community might ignore or not understand the evacuation alert because it was in English.

"They are family," she said. "I'm hoping they stay alert and listen to the news and the authorities. This is scary."

Yen, who is originally from Vietnam and has lived in Orange County since 1980, quickly stopped by her house Friday morning to grab important documents and medications. By then her neighborhood was "a ghost town," and she was comforted to see police officers going door to door to make sure everyone had evacuated.

"We understand that this is frightening," Garden Grove Mayor Stephanie Klopfenstein said. "But the evacuation orders are in place for your safety."

Local Vietnamese television stations translated updates from officials and urged residents to take the situation seriously.

Ugandans rue link to Bundibugyo, the Ebola virus type named after a district of cocoa farmers

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press
KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Boon-dee-BOO-joh.

Before it became the somewhat easy-to-mispronounce name of a rare type of Ebola virus, Bundibugyo is a mountainous district in western Uganda that even some locals would struggle to pinpoint on a map.

It's home to roughly 200,000 people. Many are cocoa farmers who search for whatever cultivable land they can find in the impossibly steep landscape of hills and valleys marking Uganda's border with Congo. As an example of the classic village idyll, Bundibugyo is a beautiful place.

Yet it now trends for an unpleasant reason, making some Ugandans rue Bundibugyo's association with the current Ebola outbreak, which has infected hundreds of people in eastern Congo. There are 160 suspected Ebola deaths in two provinces.

Virus type discovered in 2007

The Ugandan district's connection to the Bundibugyo virus stems from an Ebola outbreak there nearly two decades ago that was flagged as a new species of Ebola, a viral disease that usually manifests as hemorrhagic fever.

The outbreak wasn't the Sudan virus, named for the area in present-day South Sudan where that type was first identified. It also wasn't the type known as Zaire, as present-day Congo was known when Ebola — itself the name of a Congolese river — was first discovered in 1976.

So the November 2007 outbreak in a remote part of western Uganda came to be known as Bundibugyo, one that scientists even now haven't studied as much. That is why Ebola specialists say it is particularly dangerous. Moreover, it was spreading in Congolese villages before health authorities there identified it as the cause of sickness in a growing number of people.

The 2007 outbreak in Bundibugyo killed at least 37 people but had been contained by the end of the year. A second outbreak of the Bundibugyo virus, also relatively small, came in 2012 in Congo's northeast.

Initial cases in those outbreaks were identified early, allowing for a quick public health response, according to Dr. Tom Ksiazek, a University of Texas Medical Branch virologist who directed the group within the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that first identified the Bundibugyo virus.

Ugandans upset about the name

This time, while there is no Ebola in Bundibugyo, a lingering connection to the picturesque Ugandan district is hurtful, said Ugandan government spokesman Alan Kasujja, who has urged global health authorities to clarify that Uganda isn't the epicenter of the latest outbreak.

"Bundibugyo is too beautiful to be the name of a disease," he said on X. "We need to take back its name from this madness."

The World Health Organization is responsible for the taxonomic descriptions. As was seen with the global mpox outbreak — the disease's name was changed in 2022 from monkeypox — the United Nations agency is sensitive to the use of descriptors or tags that may expose whole communities to stigmatization.

With Ebola, however, the trend has been to name viruses for the places where they were first identified.

Ugandan health authorities have experience dealing with Ebola, one reason they are adamant there is "no Ebola" in this East African country and want WHO to be more specific in its updates on the toll of the outbreak now deemed to be of global concern.

Cases in Uganda linked to Congo

Uganda has reported five cases, all linked to the outbreak in Congo. One of them, a 59-year-old Congolese man, was admitted to a hospital in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, on May 11 and died three days later. On Saturday, Ugandan health authorities said a driver and a health worker — both Ugandans — exposed to that Congolese patient have since tested positive. The others are two Congolese women who sought medical care in Uganda before Congo declared an outbreak on May 15.

This outbreak is on "the Congo side" mainly, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said Thursday, urging local tourism authorities to fight the perception that Ebola is spreading in Uganda.

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Museveni urged Ugandans to “stop shaking hands” as part of measures to avoid infection. He also ordered the postponement of an annual religious event that attracts thousands of pilgrims, from Congo and elsewhere, who converge around a Catholic basilica just outside Kampala by June 3.

Other measures announced Thursday include the suspension of all public transportation and flights between Congo and Uganda.

Contact tracing is key

The risk stemming from cross-border commerce is high, said Dr. Emmanuel Batiibwe, who led efforts to stop an Ebola outbreak in 2022 that killed at least 55 people.

Stopping the current outbreak from spreading into Uganda will require “enhanced surveillance at all points of entry,” he said.

Uganda has had multiple Ebola outbreaks, including one in 2000 that killed more than 200 people. There was an outbreak in Kampala last year.

All available vaccines and treatments for Ebola don’t work for Bundibugyo patients. Tracing contacts and isolating them is seen as especially key to stopping the spread of this virus, in addition to getting healthcare workers proper protective equipment.

A family of fruit bats is believed to be the natural hosts of the viruses that cause Ebola, according to WHO. Ebola is spread by contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials.

How South African scientists identified hantavirus on a cruise ship thousands of miles away

By MICHELLE GUMEDE Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — When South African infectious disease specialist Lucille Blumberg checked her email on the morning of May 1, while the country was celebrating the Labor Day holiday, an urgent message caught her attention.

A U.K.-based colleague had written about a passenger from a cruise ship sailing thousands of miles away in the Atlantic Ocean who had been evacuated and admitted to a Johannesburg hospital with suspected pneumonia. Others aboard the vessel were also sick.

The colleague, who monitors diseases in remote British overseas territories in the South Atlantic Ocean, asked Blumberg to follow up on the passenger, who had been evacuated from the ship in one of the territories, Ascension Island.

Blumberg and other experts at South Africa’s National Institute for Communicable Diseases were suddenly thrown into the race to identify the cause of an outbreak aboard the Dutch cruise ship MV Hondius.

“Even though it was a public holiday, we moved, we moved really fast,” Blumberg told The Associated Press. “It was busy. There were many conversations. There were online discussions, and there was laboratory testing happening at the time.”

Within 24 hours, they had determined that the man’s illness was caused by hantavirus, a rare rodent-borne virus.

A process of elimination to identify the disease

The elderly British man had arrived at a private hospital in Johannesburg days earlier and was seriously ill, but health workers weren’t sure of the underlying cause.

By the time he was evacuated from the ship, two elderly Dutch passengers who had been on board the MV Hondius cruise liner had already died, but there had been little alarm. Ascension Island health authorities had reported a cluster of illnesses on the ship that appeared to be pneumonia to the World Health Organization.

At first, Blumberg and her colleagues thought it might be Legionella, a bacterium that causes a serious form of pneumonia, Legionnaires’ disease. Or maybe bird flu.

“I called my infectious disease colleagues, and we had a caucus, and we discussed the usual ones,” Blumberg said. “Legionella is well described in outbreaks in hotels and on cruise ships, and influenza certainly is. These people had visited islands where avian influenza is well documented.”

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Tests on all those were negative. The experts also ran an extensive panel of tests for other respiratory diseases. Also, all negative.

The team then began looking more closely at where the ship came from — Argentina — and the fact that passengers on board were avid bird watchers and had reportedly been to parts of South America where there were birds, but also rodents.

Collaboration with experts in South America and the US

That pushed the South African disease experts toward another theory: the rare, rodent-borne hantavirus infection, which is found in parts of South America.

"It's a well-described, not common, but it's a well-described virus in Chile and Argentina," Blumberg said. She added that their work was aided by collaboration with hantavirus experts from South America and the United States, facilitated by the WHO, the U.N. health agency.

"You can get onto a Zoom (call) online and ask your questions and get advice. This is not something every day. So that was quite extraordinary," Blumberg said.

By then, it was Saturday morning. Blumberg called the head of the only laboratory in South Africa that can test for hantavirus.

"I said, we want to do hanta, and she said, 'yeah, I'm coming.'"

The tests, carried out on the sick man's blood samples, came back positive for hantavirus that afternoon. The team did a second set of tests to be sure, Blumberg said.

Finally, there was a 'wow moment'

Those positive tests, which also identified the Andes strain of hantavirus, allowed the WHO to inform the cruise ship what it was dealing with and announce an outbreak on board. While hantavirus is not easily spread from person to person, the WHO says the Andes virus can be transmitted between people.

The test results also led Blumberg to rush to collect blood samples from a Dutch woman — one of the first two cruise passengers to die — who had disembarked from the ship with her husband's body on the island of St. Helena and flown to South Africa, where she died.

A posthumous hantavirus test on her was also positive.

"It was a bit of a wow moment," Blumberg said. "And at least once you know what you're dealing with, it's much easier to respond."

The British man who was the first confirmed case of hantavirus infection from the cruise ship is improving in hospital, South Africa's health ministry has said. Meanwhile, the ship has arrived at the Dutch port of Rotterdam, where it was disinfected, and the remaining crew members disembarked.

"I've been doing outbreaks for 25 years. That's what we do. We do them every day," she said. "I think the important thing was to respond immediately to a question that clearly was urgent and then to take it from there."

Republicans are rushing to redraw districts before midterms. Here's where things stand

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Republicans are rushing to redraw congressional districts to their advantage ahead of the midterm elections following a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that weakened minority protections under the federal Voting Rights Act.

In a matter of just weeks, new U.S. House districts already have been enacted in Tennessee and Alabama and have cleared at least one legislative chamber in Louisiana and South Carolina. But hurdles remain in courthouses and capitols before the new maps can be used in the November elections.

Voting districts typically are redrawn after a census at the start of a decade. But President Donald Trump has urged Republican-led states to redistrict now to try to hold on to the GOP's narrow House majority in the face of political headwinds. A president's party typically loses congressional seats in the midterms, and Trump's approval ratings are in the negative.

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Republicans stand to gain seats from the aggressive redistricting. Since Trump first urged Texas to redraw its voting districts last year, Republicans think they could win as many as 15 additional seats from new House districts in seven states. Democrats have countered only partially, hoping to pick up six seats from new districts in two states.

Here's a look at where things stand on the most recent redistricting efforts:

South Carolina Republicans grapple with divisions

Republican Gov. Henry McMaster called lawmakers into special session to consider congressional redistricting. The Republican-led House passed a plan early Wednesday that would improve the party's chances of winning the state's only Democratic-held seat.

Senators are to meet Saturday — for the third straight day — to consider the redistricting plan. But passage is not guaranteed.

Democrats are opposed, and some Republicans also have reservations. Some GOP senators fear that their attempt to win the district held by Democratic U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn could backfire by spreading so many Democrats into Republican-held districts that they become susceptible to being lost.

South Carolina's primaries are set for June 9. The legislation revising the districts would set a new congressional primary for August.

Louisiana lawmakers put forth two options for maps

The Supreme Court struck down Louisiana's congressional map, which contains two majority-Black districts held by Democrats, as an illegal racial gerrymander. The state House is expected to debate a revised map next week that would significantly reshape one of those districts while giving Republicans an improved chance to win it.

Although Republicans who dominate the state Legislature are aligned on the broad contours of the new map, the House and Senate have competing visions for how to divvy up certain localities, including which parishes will be kept whole and which will be sliced up.

A House committee tweaked a map previously passed by the Senate. If the House and Senate pass different versions, a joint committee of lawmakers could try to negotiate a compromise before the session is set to end June 1.

Republican Gov. Jeff Landry postponed Louisiana's May 16 congressional primary until later this summer to allow time for redistricting.

Court weighs whether to block Alabama's new map

A federal court heard arguments Friday on a request to block Alabama from using congressional districts that could help Republicans gain an additional seat in the midterm elections. It's the latest twist in a long-running legal case.

Republican state lawmakers in 2023 approved a map with one majority-Black district. The court previously blocked that map and ordered a new one that resulted in Democrats winning two seats in which Black residents comprise a majority or close to it.

But the U.S. Supreme Court recently overturned that order and directed the lower court to reexamine the case in light of the Louisiana decision.

Attorneys for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the ACLU, which are representing Black voters, want a three-judge panel to prevent the state from using the 2023 map. They contend a preliminary injunction is warranted, because the Louisiana decision should not affect a separate finding that Alabama's map was intentionally discriminatory against Black voters.

Alabama's primary elections were May 19. But new congressional primaries are scheduled for August for the districts that are different under the 2023 map.

Tennessee lawsuit claims lawmakers went too far

A state court panel heard arguments Thursday in another NAACP lawsuit seeking to invalidate Tennessee's new congressional map, which carves up a Memphis-based, majority-Black district represented by a Democrat. The new map could give Republicans an improved chance to sweep all nine of the state's seats.

The lawsuit contends the General Assembly included provisions in the redistricting legislation that weren't specifically authorized or necessary under a proclamation by Republican Gov. Bill Lee that set the agenda for

the special session. Among those is a provision repealing a state law that prohibits mid-decade redistricting. If the legislature exceeded its authority, then the lawsuit asserts that the new map cannot be used.

Behavior of teen in mosque shooting led police to seize family guns a year before attack

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE The Associated Press

One of the teenagers who killed three people at a San Diego mosque this week was flagged to law enforcement last year for exhibiting alarming behavior and idolizing Nazis, prompting police to confiscate his father's guns, according to court records.

The officers who conducted a welfare check at the home of Caleb Vazquez wrote that he was "involved in suspicious behavior idolizing nazis and mass shooters," and obtained a court order on Jan. 29, 2025, to remove 26 guns under a 2014 California law allowing the confiscation of firearms from people considered dangerous.

Vazquez's father initially denied police entry into his home when they requested to see how he was storing his weapons.

Vazquez's parents had voluntarily removed the guns from the house and placed them in a secure storage facility days earlier, according to an affidavit signed by Marco Vazquez, the father.

Authorities have said Vazquez, 18, met Cain Clark, 17, online, where they both were radicalized. Police haven't shared more details about how they knew each other, or specified whose weapons were used in the shooting.

Cain Clark's mother told law enforcement that weapons were missing from her home on Monday, kicking off an hourslong search for the teens before they committed the shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego and then killed themselves, police said.

Court filings indicate mental health struggles

Court filings show Vazquez decided to "secure all sharp knives in the home" and removed from the house the firearms that they had previously kept in a secure gun safe into an outside storage facility. The affidavit also mentions unspecified serious allegations against their son, who was also previously committed to an involuntary psychiatric hospitalization. The court filings, first reported by The New York Times, didn't say what he was admitted for.

The Vazquez family said in a statement released Thursday that Caleb Vazquez was on the autism spectrum and had grown to resent parts of his identity — but didn't specify what aspects were challenging to him.

"Coming from a diverse family that not only includes immigrants but Muslims as well, we always taught the importance of acceptance, compassion, and love for one another. We are proud of the different backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, and religions within our family and community," their statement said.

"We believe this, combined with exposure to hateful rhetoric, extremist content, and propaganda spread across parts of the internet, social media, and other online platforms, contributed to his descent into radicalized ideologies and violent beliefs," said their statement, released through their attorney Colin Rudolph.

His family said they tried to get him help

They encouraged him to seek help and he spent time in rehabilitation centers, the statement said. Vazquez's parents did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment from The Associated Press. An attorney who represented Vazquez's parents when their guns were confiscated also didn't immediately respond to calls.

In writings by Vazquez and Clark that expressed white supremacist views, Vazquez wrote of having "some mental health issues" and being rejected by women. They suggest both teenagers idolized previous shooters who have died while carrying out mass shootings. The writings expressed hatred toward Jewish people, Muslims, Black people and a range of other groups.

Vazquez left the San Diego Unified School District in June 2018 after attending Washington Elementary up until the 5th grade, district spokesperson James Canning told The Associated Press. It's unclear where

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he went to school after that.

Clark was enrolled in a virtual high school in the district, Canning said.

Police began searching for the teens on Monday after Clark's mother called to say her son was suicidal and ran away. She told them he was dressed in camouflage, had taken multiple weapons from the home, and was with an acquaintance, San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said earlier this week.

Officers were still interviewing the mother about places the teens might be when the shooting began at the county's largest mosque.

De-radicalizing people is becoming more difficult

Vazquez's father said in a 2025 court statement that his family made a concerted effort to steer Caleb Vazquez back onto the right track. He said when they locked away their weapons, they were in communication with his school, were monitoring his social media presence closely and he was in therapy twice a week.

"We observe all of his online activities, who he talks to, what he talks about, and who he is friends with," Marco Vazquez wrote, emphasizing that he didn't support his son's ideology.

Some experts say it's increasingly difficult to help people drawn to the kind of radicalism Vazquez and Clark expressed.

Samira Benz works for the Violence Prevention Network, which conducts interventions when people are radicalized into believing in violent extremism. Benz said the work has become increasingly complicated as the internet blurs ideologies and creates niche, meme-based languages that can be fleeting and hard to decipher.

"Even if a parent is looking at the phone of their child, they don't necessarily see something bad is going on," Benz said.

SpaceX launches its biggest, most beefed-up Starship yet on a test flight

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

SpaceX launched its biggest, most powerful Starship yet on a test flight Friday, an upgraded version that NASA is counting on to land astronauts on the moon.

The redesigned mega rocket made its debut two days after SpaceX CEO Elon Musk announced he's taking the company public. It blasted off from the southern tip of Texas, carrying 20 mock Starlink satellites that were released midway through the hourlong spaceflight that stretched halfway around the world.

The spacecraft reached its final destination — the Indian Ocean — despite some engine trouble, before erupting in flames upon impact. That last part was not unexpected, according to SpaceX.

Musk called it "an epic" launch and landing.

"You scored a goal for humanity," he told his team via X.

It's the 12th test flight of the rocket that Musk is building to get people to Mars one day. But first comes the moon and NASA's Artemis program.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman flew in for the launch, saying Starship is now one step closer to the moon.

The last of the old space-skimming Starships lifted off in October. SpaceX's third-generation Starship — a souped-up version dubbed V3 — soared from a brand-new launch pad at Starbase, near the Mexican border. Last-minute pad issues thwarted Thursday evening's launch attempt.

SpaceX was hoping to avoid the fireworks it experienced during back-to-back launches last year when midair explosions rained wreckage down on the Atlantic. Earlier flights also ended in flames.

There was no fireball this time until the very end. The spacecraft plummeted upright into the Indian Ocean under seemingly full control, then toppled over and ignited.

While the liftoff itself went well, not all of the engines fired as the booster attempted a controlled return. The spacecraft also had to make do with fewer engines, but kept heading eastward 120 miles (194 kilometers) up. A pair of modified, camera-equipped Starlinks ejected from Starship provided brief views of the spacecraft in flight — a remarkable first.

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At 407 feet (124 meters), the latest model eclipses the older Starship lines by several feet (more than 1 meter) and packs more engine thrust.

The revamped booster sports fewer but bigger and stronger grid fins for steering it back to Earth following liftoff, and a larger and more robust fuel transfer line to feed the 33 main engines. This fuel line is the size of SpaceX's Falcon 9 first-stage booster. The retro-looking, stainless steel spacecraft also has more of everything — more cameras and more navigation and computer power — as well as docking cones for future rendezvous and moon missions.

Starship is meant to be fully reusable, with giant mechanical arms at the launch pads to catch the returning rocket stages. But on this latest trial run, nothing was being recovered. The Gulf of Mexico marked the end of the road for the redesigned first-stage booster, and the Indian Ocean for the spacecraft and its satellite demos.

NASA is paying SpaceX billions of dollars — and also Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin — to provide the lunar landers that will be used to land Artemis astronauts on the moon.

The two companies are scrambling to be first.

While Starship has reached the fringes of space on multiple flights lasting an hour at most, Bezos' Blue Moon has yet to lift off, although a prototype is being readied for a moonshot later this year.

NASA is following April's successful lunar flyaround by four astronauts with a docking trial run in orbit around Earth planned for next year. For that Artemis III mission, astronauts will practice docking their Orion capsule with Starship, Blue Moon or both.

A moon landing by two astronauts — Artemis IV — could follow as soon as 2028 using either Starship or Blue Moon, whichever lander is safer and ready first. It will be NASA's first lunar landing with a crew since 1972's Apollo 17. The goal this time is a moon base near the lunar south pole, staffed by astronauts as well as robots.

SpaceX is already taking reservations for private flights to the moon and Mars on Starship.

The world's first space tourist, California businessman Dennis Tito, and his wife signed up 3 1/2 years ago for a flight around the moon. The timing is uncertain.

This week, another wealthy space tourist — Chinese-born bitcoin investor Chun Wang — announced he will fly to Mars on Starship's first interplanetary mission. Wang previously chartered a SpaceX polar flight in a Dragon capsule last year and, along with his hand-picked crew, became the first to orbit above the north and south poles.

No price tag or date was revealed for his Mars cruise.

NASCAR's Kyle Busch was short of breath, coughing up blood day before his death, 911 call reveals

By STEVE REED AP Sports Writer

CONCORD, N.C. (AP) — NASCAR driver Kyle Busch experienced shortness of breath, felt he was overheating and was coughing up blood the day before his death, according to a 911 call obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

Busch died Thursday at age 41. No cause of death has been given, though his family said earlier he had been hospitalized with a "severe illness" three days before he was to compete in the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Busch was testing in the Chevrolet racing simulator in Concord on Wednesday when he became unresponsive and was transported to a hospital in Charlotte, several people familiar with the situation told the AP.

The people spoke on condition of anonymity because details have not been disclosed by Busch's team or family.

During the emergency call placed late that afternoon from the General Motors training facility, an unidentified caller calmly told the dispatch: "I've got an individual that's (got) shortness of breath, very hot, thinks he's going to pass out, and is producing a little bit of blood, coughing up some blood."

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Busch was lying on the bathroom floor inside the complex and the caller told dispatch "he is awake," according to audio provided by the Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office.

The man then gave directions on where emergency responders should go and asked that they turn off any sirens upon arrival.

NASCAR CEO Steve O'Donnell addressed reporters at a news conference Friday but declined to answer any questions about the cause of death or any health problems that might have plagued Busch.

"We are 24 hours from getting a phone call and out of respect for the family, and they have asked for privacy, I am not going to address anything," O'Donnell said. "But transparency is something that we all believe in. So in due time I think that everyone will be comfortable with where things stand."

O'Donnell talked at length about Busch's legacy, his rebellious nature and even his feuds with NASCAR, while calling him "an American badass."

"We certainly had our battles but I would give a lot of money to have a few more battles," O'Donnell said. He joked about the time Busch pretended to be seriously hurt when NASCAR had ordered him to go to the infield care center after hitting the wall at Texas.

"He laid flat out on a pit cart, made fun of us," O'Donnell said. "I was mad at the time, but I look back and that was damn funny — and that was Kyle."

O'Donnell mentioned NASCAR might consider adding Busch to this year's list of Hall of Fame Class of 2027 inductees, which was determined earlier this week with Kevin Harvick, Jeff Burton and Larry Phillips being voted in.

The news of Busch's death sent shock waves across the motorsports world on one of racing's biggest weekends, which also features the Indianapolis 500.

The NHL's Carolina Hurricanes honored Busch with a moment of silence before Thursday night's Eastern Conference Finals game against the Montreal Canadiens.

Vice President JD Vance took to social media, saying "I had the opportunity to meet Kyle, one of NASCAR's greatest racers, on the campaign trail in 2024. Usha and I are praying for him and his family. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord."

Richard Childress Racing announced plans to suspend use of Busch's No. 8 Cup Series car until his 11-year-old son, Brexton, is old enough to begin NASCAR racing.

Gloomy, gray skies hung over the track on an unseasonably cool day in Concord, which seemed a fitting background for the in memoriam photo of Busch on the videoboard.

Christopher Bell was among the drivers planning to run in the NASCAR Trucks Series race on Friday night, one that Busch had been scheduled to compete in. Busch won last week's Trucks race at Dover — the final win of his career — giving him 234 victories across NASCAR's three national series, the most of any driver.

"It's going to be very strange to be out there without Kyle in the field," Bell said. "It's going to take a long time before things feel back to normal."

Bell called Busch's death a "gut-wrenching feeling."

He said he spoke to Busch before the last Trucks Series race and said he seemed "normal, like completely normal."

On Monday, Busch posted a birthday message to Brexton on Instagram, saying, "Your mom & I are so proud who you're turning out to be!"

The father and son spent Tuesday night in Durham, North Carolina, with the Andretti family at the opening of a go-kart facility.

"I guess it is a very stark reminder of how fragile life can be," Bell said.

O'Donnell said NASCAR never seriously considered canceling the Coca-Cola 600.

"Kyle Busch would probably be pretty (upset) if we didn't race," O'Donnell said. "So we're going to honor his memory and make sure people know what he was all about."

1 person has died after blast at New York City shipyard that also injured 36 people, officials say.

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One person has died after a fire and two explosions Friday at a New York City shipyard, officials say.

Officials said 36 people were injured, most of them firefighters and other first responders, and one civilian died at the scene.

A firefighter and a fire marshal were inside the structure when a second explosion happened, and both were seriously injured by the shock wave from the blast.

"This was a complex, fast-developing emergency situation," New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani said during a news conference Friday evening.

Multiple people called the fire department around 3:30 p.m., reporting smoke and two workers trapped in the basement of a 150-foot by 150-foot (46 meters by 46 meters) metal structure at the back of the shipyard, Fire Commissioner Lillian Bonsignore said.

Firefighting and EMS crews were on the scene within six minutes. But shortly after they arrived, an explosion occurred, causing serious injuries to multiple fire department members and a couple of civilians, Bonsignore said — including one who died at the scene.

Five firefighters and rescue paramedics were searching for the trapped workers inside, on top of and next to the structure when the second blast occurred, said Chief of Department John Esposito, causing more injuries.

The most serious injuries happened to a fire marshal and a firefighter who were inside and hit by the energy wave from the blast.

"Confined spaces are very dangerous operations for any rescuers," Esposito said.

The fire marshal is in critical but stable condition with a fractured skull and a small brain bleed, said the fire department's chief medical officer Dr. David Prezant.

"We will be watching him very carefully over the next 24 hours to make certain there is not subsequent brain swelling. As long as there is not, he should do well," Prezant said.

The firefighter was in serious condition when he arrived at the hospital. But Prezant said he was doing "very well" by Friday evening, and he was being observed to ensure he doesn't have muscle injuries.

The fire was still burning but under control Friday night, with more than 200 firefighters still at the scene, Mamdani said. A comprehensive investigation into the cause of the fire will begin as soon as possible, he said.

Richard Oviogor, who was in the area, told WABC-TV that he heard two explosions and what seemed like a "big shock wave."

The area is home to several businesses, including a coffee roasting company and a self-storage facility. The shipyard used to be owned by the Bethlehem Steel Company, which built ships for the U.S. Navy during World War II.

Congo curtails funeral wakes in Ebola outbreak as WHO upgrades risk assessment

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and MONIKA PRONCZUK Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Authorities in northeastern Congo banned funeral wakes and gatherings of more than 50 people Friday in an effort to curb a rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak in a region where medical workers have struggled with a lack of resources and pushback from angry residents.

The World Health Organization said that the outbreak now poses a "very high" risk for Congo — up from a previous categorization of "high" — but that the risk of the disease spreading globally remains low.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said 82 cases and seven deaths have been confirmed in Congo, but that the outbreak is believed to be "much larger."

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There is no available vaccine for the Bundibugyo virus, which spread undetected for weeks in Congo's Ituri Province following the first known death while authorities tested for another, more common, Ebola virus and came up negative. There are now 750 suspected cases and 177 suspected deaths, though more are expected as surveillance expands.

"We are trying to catch up," Congo Foreign Minister Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner told the AP. "It is a race against the clock."

Efforts ramping up in Ituri Province

Supplies were being rushed to Ituri in the northeastern corner of the country, where nearly a million people have been displaced by armed conflicts over mineral resources. Ramping up contact tracing is a priority, Kayikwamba Wagner said.

In the provincial capital of Bunia, AP reporters saw empty emergency treatment centers, and doctors in the nearby town of Bambu using expired medical masks while tending to suspected Ebola patients.

The provincial government said Friday it was temporarily banning wakes and gatherings of more than 50 people. It said funerals must be conducted in strict compliance with health protocols. The authorities also required journalists to obtain a permit to report on the outbreak, impeding their work.

Illness spreads in rebel-held areas

The illness also has been reported in two Congolese provinces to the south of Ituri — North Kivu and South Kivu, where the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group controls many key cities, including Goma and Bukavu, where the rebels reported two cases.

The group said Friday it was creating a crisis team to fight the outbreak.

Kayikwamba Wagner said having the illness in rebel-held areas was alarming because "M23 is, despite whatever ambitions they may have, thoroughly ill equipped" to fight the disease.

She said the Congo government and rebels were not communicating on the outbreak.

Response clashes with local customs

The efforts of health officials and aid groups have met with pushback from communities due to misinformation or situations where medical policy has clashed with local customs such as burial rites.

On Thursday, an Ebola treatment center in Rwampara was set on fire by youths who were angered when they were blocked from retrieving the body of a friend who apparently had died of Ebola, according to witnesses and police.

The dangerous work of burying suspected victims is being managed wherever possible by authorities, because the bodies can be highly contagious and lead to further spread when they are prepared for burial or when people gather for funerals.

Julienne Lusenge, president of Women's Solidarity for Inclusive Peace and Development, a local aid group, said the population's anger is mostly due to misinformation. "We have lived through years and years of conflict and hardship so rumors spread easily," she said.

She said some churches have told their congregations the outbreak is fake and that divine protection makes medical care unnecessary.

Grief and the lack of a proper goodbye

In the Ituri province mining town of Mongbwalu where the outbreak is believed to have originated, Lokana Moro Faustin lost his 16-year-old daughter to the disease and bemoaned the fact that he was not able to give her a proper goodbye because of Ebola restrictions.

"At first, we thought it was malaria. But then came vomiting, a high fever, nosebleeds, and bloody diarrhea," he said, grief-stricken.

The teenager died on May 15 and her body was taken from the hospital by specialized teams and taken directly to the cemetery for a secure burial. Faustin was not able to say goodbye because he was in self-isolation, and it pained him to have his daughter buried by people who were not family.

In Bunia, coffin workshop manager Christian Djakisa said demand has soared since the outbreak began. "We're here every hour making coffins," he said.

Aid is being flown in, but front line staff lacks resources

The United Nations said Friday it released \$60 million from its Central Emergency Response Fund to

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accelerate the response in Congo and in the region.

The U.S. has pledged \$23 million in funding to bolster the response in Congo and Uganda, and said it would also fund the establishment of up to 50 Ebola treatment clinics in the affected regions.

Lusenge said her group's small hospital near in Bunia lacks basic protective equipment, exposing nurses and doctors to possible infection, she said. "We only have hand sanitizer and a few masks for the nurses, but we need much more than that," Lusenge said.

Public health officials say that a person infected with Ebola generally passes the virus along to one to two other people — which is less contagious than measles, whooping cough and chickenpox, in which one person can infect around a dozen others.

But researchers note that transmission rates have varied in past Ebola outbreaks, and they are still trying to determine how contagious the Bundibugyo virus is.

The outbreak is bigger than official figures show, WHO says

Both the WHO and Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention believe the outbreak is larger than the cases reported so far.

The region's already-weak health infrastructure and surveillance capacity has been further weakened by international aid cuts, experts say. The International Rescue Committee said it had to stop its surveillance activities in three out of five areas in Ituri over the last year because of funding cuts.

Armed conflict in the region further complicates efforts to handle the crisis. To get from Bunia to Mongwalu, aid groups have to brace for potential attacks from armed groups.

"The outbreak can still be contained but the window for action is narrow," Gabriela Arenas from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said Friday.

Fentanyl, meth found at house where New Mexico responders got sick after answering overdose call

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Fentanyl and methamphetamine were found at a home where first responders became sick after answering a call about suspected overdoses in a rural county in New Mexico, authorities said Friday.

Three people found inside the house on Wednesday died. A fourth person who was in the house and one of the emergency responders who became sick were still being treated at a hospital Friday.

A doctor who saw the responders exhibiting symptoms — including nausea and dizziness — said their symptoms most closely resembled fentanyl exposure. However, the investigation into how the exposure happened and what caused it was ongoing.

University of New Mexico Hospital Chief Medical Officer Steve McLaughlin said during a news conference in Albuquerque that authorities were working "under the assumption" that fentanyl was to blame. He said the responders' symptoms ranged from mild to slightly more severe.

"It's probably not absorbed through your skin, but it would be absorbed through your eyes, nose, mucous membranes, or if you inhale it," McLaughlin told The Associated Press.

Meth is notoriously toxic when exposed to it, and fentanyl less so. Authorities noted during Friday's news conference that the responders who became ill had directly treated the people found inside the house east of Albuquerque, in the rural town of Mountainair.

More than a dozen first responders were quarantined and decontaminated after responding to the scene.

Of the two people still hospitalized Friday, one was a person who was found unresponsive in the home where three died. Authorities said they were called to the home by a co-worker of one of the people inside after they failed to show up to work.

New Mexico State Police Chief Matt Broom said investigators did not immediately find evidence of drug manufacturing in the house.

State police said early on that there was no threat to the public and that investigators did not believe the substance that caused the responders to become sick was airborne.

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Two of the victims were identified Friday as Mika Rascon, 51, and Georgia Rascon, 49. The name of the third person who died has not been released, and the cause and manner of their deaths has not been determined.

Audio archives from the Torrance County Fire Dispatch channel on the site Broadcastify showed that responders went to the home following a report of a 60-year-old man unconscious but breathing.

Within minutes, a dispatcher is heard saying there were three other people at the home, two of whom might not be breathing. Then came a call for naloxone, the opioid-overdose antidote. One person was revived using naloxone, authorities said.

Less than an hour after the initial call, the dispatch center relayed that there were multiple exposures.

Some first responders began coughing, vomiting and experiencing dizziness, authorities said. Most had no symptoms, hospital officials said.

The initial responders on the scene did not have protective gear but followed safety protocols, said Torrance County Fire Chief Gary Smith. They saw two victims inside, pulled them into the fresh air and attempted to resuscitate them, he said.

"This did come in as an overdose. There was no indication of any type of hazmat type scenario," Smith said.

Debriefings were planned in coming days to determine if there were any weaknesses in the response, he added.

Scientific evidence shows fentanyl, a potent opioid, does not cause overdoses through casual skin contact or brief airborne exposure in typical field scenarios. Experts say overdoses require significant ingestion, injection or inhalation of the substance.

Residents around Mountainair, a town with fewer than 1,000 people, have voiced frustration about drug use in the community and elsewhere.

New Mexico had the fourth-highest rate of drug overdose deaths of any U.S. state in 2024, with 775 deaths, according to the most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Blanche at center of Republican firestorm over \$1.8B fund as he seeks to prove his loyalty to Trump

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When acting Attorney General Todd Blanche signed off on a nearly \$1.8 billion fund meant to compensate President Donald Trump's allies for alleged political prosecution, he may have pleased his boss.

But the eyebrow-raising move — the latest in his push to prove his loyalty to Trump — has agitated the same Republican lawmakers whose support he would need if he is nominated for the permanent job.

Blanche insists he's not auditioning for the job of attorney general. But a series of splashy steps the Justice Department has taken under his watch since he took the position on an acting basis last month, including an indictment of former FBI Director James Comey, has left no doubt about the impression he's hoping to make on the president who appointed him.

The fund in particular has put Blanche at the center of a Republican firestorm at a time when he aims to establish himself as the perfect person for the post for the remainder of Trump's term. And it sharpened concerns from Democrats and other Blanche critics that he has not shed his mantle as the president's personal attorney.

"So the nation's top law enforcement official is asking for a slush fund to pay people who assault cops? Utterly stupid, morally wrong — Take your pick," Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the former majority leader, said in a statement.

From Trump's former lawyer to the Justice Department's top job

A former federal prosecutor in New York, Blanche came to public prominence for his lead role on Trump's defense team, including during the Republican's hush money trial in New York. That perch afforded him, he has said, a firsthand look at what he contends was the weaponization of the criminal justice system

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against Trump.

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Now he finds himself the latest Trump-appointed attorney general to simultaneously confront expectations from subordinates to uphold institutional norms and demands from the president to do his bidding.

Trump's first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, was forced out after the 2018 midterms after infuriating the president over his recusal from an investigation into ties between Russia and the 2016 presidential campaign. Another, William Barr, resigned after their relationship fizzled over Barr's refusal to back Trump's baseless claims of massive election fraud. Bondi was removed after struggling to bring successful prosecutions against Trump's political opponents.

Blanche has moved to advance Trump's interests

Two weeks after becoming acting attorney general, Blanche announced the appointment of Joseph diGenova, an 81-year-old former Justice Department prosecutor from the Reagan administration, to a special position inside the department, where he'll oversee a Florida-based investigation into whether former law enforcement and intelligence officials conspired over the last decade to undermine Trump.

"At some point, at the right time, that will be made public and the American people will see exactly what happened to this administration and President Trump over the past decade," Blanche said in a Fox News Channel interview.

Prior government reviews of the FBI's Trump-Russia investigation, a centerpiece of the current conspiracy investigation, have failed to produce criminal charges against senior officials or evidence of criminal conduct by them. It's not clear what, if any, new information the continuing investigation has developed.

The Justice Department also last month obtained an indictment charging Comey, a Trump foe whose prosecution the president has long called for, with threatening Trump through a social media photo of seashells in the numerical arrangement of "86 47" — a case legal experts say will be challenging for prosecutors. Comey has said he wouldn't be surprised if the Justice Department pursues additional indictments against him.

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The \$1.8 billion fund sparks Republican resistance

Arguably the most audacious demonstration of loyalty to Trump came this week when the Justice Department announced the creation of a \$1.776 billion fund to compensate people who feel they've been unjustly investigated and prosecuted, coupled with a guarantee of immunity from tax audits for Trump and his eldest sons.

As Republican concerns grew, Blanche held a tense meeting with GOP lawmakers Thursday. Shortly afterward, Senate Republicans abruptly left Washington without voting on a roughly \$70 billion bill to fund immigration enforcement agencies.

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"It's pretty clear that he's not the attorney general for the United States as much as he's the attorney general for President Trump," said Stephen Saltzburg, a George Washington University law professor and former senior Justice Department official. He said Blanche would get an A+ if report cards were issued for loyalty to Trump.

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Blanche says he feels no pressure to please Trump

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Blanche's supporters dismiss the suggestion he is trying to curry favor with Trump to secure the permanent job.

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But for some Democrats, that's a difference without a distinction.

"Mr. Attorney General, you are acting today like the president's personal attorney," Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat, told Blanche during a combative exchange in the Senate hearing, "and that's the whole problem."

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Rubio reports 'slight progress' in Iran talks as Pakistan renews efforts to mediate a peace deal

By SAM MEDNICK, SAMY MAGDY and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that "slight progress" was made during talks with Iran as Pakistan's army chief traveled to Tehran in a renewed effort to mediate a peace deal and uncertainty loomed over whether the war would resume.

Rubio spoke days after U.S. President Donald Trump said he was holding off on a military strike against the Islamic Republic because "serious negotiations" were underway. Trump has been threatening for weeks that the ceasefire reached in mid-April could end if Iran does not make a deal, with shifting parameters for striking such an agreement.

America's top diplomat made the comment ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Helsingborg, Sweden, where the military alliance discussed what role it could play in helping police the Strait of Hormuz once the war is over.

Rubio said he did not want to exaggerate the progress, saying there had been "a little bit of movement and that's good." In recent weeks, repeated claims of progress have emerged, but a deal has stayed out of reach.

Trump has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off. But he's also previously indicated he would hold off on military action to allow talks to play out, only to turn around and launch strikes. That happened at the war's outset, when he ordered strikes in late February shortly after indicating he would let talks play out.

The president said he called off attacks on Iran this week at the request of allies in the Middle East.

Pakistan's army chief arrives in Iran for third round of talks

In a renewed push for a peace agreement, Pakistan's top army officer arrived Friday in Tehran for talks with Iranian leaders, Pakistani officials and the military confirmed. It's the third round of meetings between Pakistani and Iranian officials in recent days.

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Field Marshal Asim Munir will be joined by Pakistan's interior minister, who has already met with Iranian leaders in Tehran twice this week. Pakistan has sought a deal between Iran and the U.S. since Munir facilitated face-to-face talks between the two countries in Islamabad last month.

Qatar also sent a delegation to Tehran, according to a regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the talks. The delegation is working in coordination with other countries, including Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the official said.

Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the shipment of oil, gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products. The U.S. is blockading Iranian ports and has redirected 94 commercial vessels and disabled four others since mid-April, U.S. Central Command said.

At the NATO meeting in Sweden, Rubio said he discussed reopening the strait with other foreign ministers. He said there needs to be a "plan B" if Washington and Tehran fail to reach a deal.

"Someone's going to have to do something about it, OK?" Rubio said, insisting that Iran was not going to "voluntarily reopen" the strait.

No mines have been found in the Strait of Hormuz

The American military has not found or destroyed any explosive mines in the Strait of Hormuz so far, but it is still searching, a U.S. official said Friday.

No ships have been struck or damaged by mines in the strait either, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations. That is even as some commercial traffic has been flowing, though at much lower volumes than before the war began.

Trump said last month that he ordered the military to begin mine-clearing efforts as part of a broader push to get commercial ships to traverse the strait again following several attacks by Iran.

No evidence of mine-laying by the Iranians has emerged since the start of the conflict, and U.S. officials have repeatedly said that they targeted and destroyed that capability as part of the airstrikes across the country.

Trump's war pause sparks tension with Netanyahu

Trump's decision to give more peace talks a chance sparked tension with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

An official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media said Thursday that Trump and Netanyahu had a "dramatic" phone conversation Tuesday about the status of the Iranian negotiations and that Israel is angry with Trump's efforts to strike a deal with Iran.

The White House declined to comment on the substance or tenor of the call. Trump told reporters after the conversation that Netanyahu "will do whatever I want him to do."

The comments are some of the first public signs of daylight between the leaders since they launched the war.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE separately struck Iran

Two regional officials and a Western diplomat said Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates separately launched multiple attacks on Iran and Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq during the war. An Israeli military officer with knowledge of the situation also confirmed that the UAE proactively struck Iran at least once.

All of them spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information. The regional officials said the strikes on Iran targeted military facilities.

One of the regional officials said strikes by Saudi Arabia targeted hideouts of Iraqi militias, mainly Kataib Hezbollah, after Riyadh assessed that most of the drone attacks on Saudi Arabia came from neighboring Iraq. He said Saudi Arabia has repeatedly briefed Baghdad before deciding to strike.

The Western diplomat and one of the regional officials said the UAE had pushed for a collective military response from the Gulf Arab countries since the onset of the war.

Asked for comment, the UAE referred to a May 16 statement that "all measures undertaken by the UAE have been within the framework of defensive actions aimed at protecting its sovereignty, civilians, and vital infrastructure." Saudi Arabia did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Iran has not publicly addressed being targeted by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

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Wall Street keeps rising, even as U.S. households keep getting more discouraged

By STAN CHOIE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The split between Wall Street and most U.S. households grew wider Friday as U.S. stocks rose to the finish of their eighth straight winning week, the best such streak since 2023. That's even though a survey showed U.S. consumers are feeling even worse about the economy.

The S&P 500 added 0.4% and pulled closer to its all-time high set in the middle of last week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 294 points, or 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.2%.

Ross Stores helped drive the market and rose 8.1% after the off-price retailer reported profit and revenue for the latest quarter that easily cleared analysts' expectations. CEO Jim Conroy said it saw strong customer traffic through the three months, and the company may have benefited from households spending their tax refunds.

Estee Lauder jumped 11.9% after saying it was no longer considering a possible merger with Puig, the Spanish fragrance and beauty products company.

Workday rose 5.2%, and Zoom Communications jumped 9.2% after both delivered better profit reports for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

They're the latest companies to top analysts' expectations for earnings for the start of 2026, and the cavalcade of such reports has helped U.S. stocks remain near their records. Stock prices tend to follow the path of corporate profits over the long term.

The strength is coming even after a survey of U.S. consumers by the University of Michigan found sentiment fell to a record low, piercing below a bottom in 2022 when inflation peaked above 9%. Households are feeling worried about how bad inflation is now because of expensive oil created by the war with Iran.

U.S. consumers are forecasting inflation will worsen to 4.8% in the coming 12 months, up from a forecast of 4.7% last month, according to the survey. In the longer run, their forecasts for inflation jumped to 3.9% from 3.5% last month. Such rising expectations are a concern for economists because they can drive behavior that creates a vicious cycle that makes inflation worse.

Sentiment dropped in particular for lower-income consumers who are least able to absorb higher costs for essentials, and it fell for Republicans as well, according to the survey.

Helping to keep uncertainty high have been continued swings for oil prices. They yo-yoed again Friday, like they did through the week on uncertainty about when the United States and Iran may find a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. The closure has prevented oil tankers from exiting the Persian Gulf and delivering crude to customers worldwide.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil to be delivered in August added 0.7% to settle at \$100.21 after erasing an earlier decline.

Worries about inflation staying high have pushed bond yields higher worldwide, threatening to slow economies and undercut prices for stocks and all kinds of other investments. High yields have already forced the average long-term U.S. mortgage rate to its most expensive level since last summer, and they could curtail companies' borrowing to build the AI data centers that have supported the U.S. economy's growth recently.

Yields had been down Friday morning, offering some relief, before wavering after oil prices erased their losses and the survey on consumer sentiment showed worsening inflation expectations.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury edged down to 4.56% from 4.57% late Thursday, but it remains well above its 3.97% level from before the war.

Worries about inflation have climbed so high that traders on Wall Street have eliminated bets that the Federal Reserve will resume its cuts to interest rates later this year. Lower rates would give the economy a boost, but they could also worsen inflation.

An important member of the Fed, Gov. Christopher Waller, said in a speech Friday, "If I believe inflation expectations start to become unanchored, I would not hesitate to support an increase in the target range for the federal funds rate."

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But he also said that is not the case now in his speech titled "Policy Risks Have Changed." Instead, he said it "is time to simply sit and watch how the conflict and the data evolve."

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across Europe and Asia.

Japan's Nikkei 225 climbed 2.7% to another record after a report showed inflation hitting a four-year low in April, at 1.4%, despite higher prices for oil and gas due to the war.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 rose 27.75 points to 7,473.47. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 294.04 to 50,579.70, and the Nasdaq composite added 50.87 to 26,343.97.

Trump veers off-topic during speech in New York that was supposed to be on the economy

By SEUNG MIN KIM and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

SUFFERN, New York (AP) — President Donald Trump, from a toss-up congressional district in New York on Friday, began testing his midterm message that was ostensibly on the economy.

But he veered off-topic right from the start, going off on tangents about voter identification, crime in cities, transgender women in sports and "Dumocrats," his new chosen moniker for the opposition party. He complained that toiletries are locked up in pharmacies, making them harder to buy, and polled the audience on what he should call his predecessor, former President Joe Biden.

Eventually, he landed on the topic of the speech, telling the crowd that he and his party worked to slash taxes and increase take-home pay, while Democrats opposed the effort at every turn.

"I cut your taxes, cut the taxes on workers, families, small business, who are the soul of this state," Trump said to the audience at Rockland Community College. Listing off the various provisions of the tax law, the president said: "These are all Republican tax cuts. The Democrats voted against every one of these tax cuts."

Trump traveled to the Hudson Valley area to appear with Republican Rep. Mike Lawler, who is up for reelection in what will be one of the most closely watched House races this November, for an event meant to promote the tax law Trump signed last year, particularly the quadrupling of the deduction for state and local taxes, which is critical in a high-tax state like New York.

Trump called Lawler "fantastic" and mused about how the congressman was a "pain in the ass" as he badgered the administration on expanding the deduction.

He pulled Lawler onstage during the event, and the congressman thanked the president "for working with me to deliver a big win" for the people in his district. He said that more than 90% of the people in his district were able to fully deduct their state and local taxes.

Also appearing with the president at the event Friday was Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, the Trump-backed Republican candidate for New York governor. Trump said, "Guys like Mike Lawler, guys like Bruce Blakeman, you put them in, they'll turn it around."

Trying to reverse a slumping approval rating

The White House has been looking for more opportunities to highlight Trump's economic accomplishments as his approval rating on the economy has slumped. About one-third of U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling the economy, according to a new AP-NORC poll, down slightly from 40% at the start of Trump's second term. Trump had promised to bring prices down, but gasoline prices have surged this year due to the war in Iran.

Lawler is just one of three House Republicans who represent a district won by Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris in 2024. Unlike the other two — retiring Nebraska Rep. Don Bacon and Pennsylvania Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, who's been a critic of Trump policies — Lawler has chosen to embrace the polarizing president in hopes of not alienating Republican voters who support the party's leader.

"Look, the people who hate the president — and that's their sole basis for their vote — are likely never voting for me, and you know, obviously, you need to turn out your base, and you need people energized," Lawler told The Associated Press in an interview on the sidelines of the White House congressional picnic earlier this week. "Moreover, I have a record in my district that is one I'm very proud of, and a record that

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appeals to a broad middle."

Lawler, wearing a red ball cap emblazoned with "Mr. SALT," the acronym for the state and local tax deduction he fought to include in the bill, added, "I am confident that I will be reelected on my own merits and my own record."

Trump established a SALT cap in 2017 through his Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Last year's law expanded the SALT deduction to \$40,000 from \$10,000 after arduous negotiations with Republicans, including Lawler, whose district has high local taxes. The law also raised the average tax refund for New Yorkers to more than \$3,800, according to data provided by the White House.

"My constituents were seeing anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 refund checks, which is pretty massive," said Lawler, who said he wanted to give Trump one of his "Mr. SALT" ball caps.

A competitive House race in New York

Trump formally endorsed Lawler for reelection last year, although it came at a time when the congressman was publicly mulling a run for governor of New York. The endorsement was viewed as a way to keep Lawler in a reelection bid rather than opening up a competitive House seat.

Five Democrats are vying for the party's nomination to compete against Lawler in the general election. The Democratic primary is June 23.

"Nothing says 'I don't understand my district' quite like Mike Lawler bringing Donald Trump to NY-17 to tout a disastrous economy that's crushing working families at every turn," said Riya Vashi, a spokesperson for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

National Republican Congressional Committee chairman Richard Hudson disputed that, arguing that Trump's Friday appearance will "absolutely" help.

"His poll numbers are pretty good in Lawler's district," said Hudson, a North Carolina congressman. The NRCC has been polling in competitive districts and Hudson said the "president's numbers are good. Democratic numbers are tanking."

The remarks were an official White House event and not a campaign one, said Lawler, who noted that more than 5,000 people registered to attend in the first 12 hours that a sign-up was available.

Tulsi Gabbard resigns as director of national intelligence, citing her husband's health

By MEG KINNARD, WILL WEISSERT and DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tulsi Gabbard resigned as President Donald Trump's director of national intelligence on Friday, saying she needed to leave office as her husband battles cancer. She is the fourth Cabinet member to depart during Trump's second term, all of them women.

In her resignation letter, which she posted on social media, Gabbard said she told Trump she would leave her job overseeing the coordination of 18 intelligence agencies on June 30. She said her husband had recently been diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer and "faces major challenges in the coming weeks and months."

"At this time, I must step away from public service to be by his side and fully support him through this battle," she wrote in the letter, which was reported earlier by Fox News.

Trump, in his own social media post, said "Tulsi has done an incredible job, and we will miss her." He said her principal deputy, Aaron Lukas, will serve as acting director of national intelligence.

While Gabbard says her departure is for personal reasons, the juxtaposition between her long-held, anti-interventionism stance and Trump's series of overseas military operations had seemed to put them on a collision course.

Iran put Gabbard and Trump at odds

There had been rumblings that Gabbard would split with Trump after the president's decision to strike Iran, which caused some division within his administration. Joe Kent, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, announced his resignation in March and said he "cannot in good conscience" back the war.

Gabbard, a veteran and former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii, built her political name on her

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opposition to foreign wars. This put her in an awkward position when the U.S. joined Israel in launching attacks on Iran on Feb. 28.

During a congressional hearing in March, her measured comments were notable for their careful non-endorsement of the Iran war. She repeatedly dodged questions about whether the White House had been warned of potential fallout from the conflict, including Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway crucial for global oil shipments.

Gabbard said in written remarks to the Senate Intelligence Committee that there had been no effort by Iran to rebuild its nuclear capability after U.S. attacks last year "obliterated" its nuclear program. That statement contradicted Trump, who has repeatedly asserted that the war was necessary to head off an imminent threat from the Islamic Republic.

This created several awkward exchanges with lawmakers who asked Gabbard for her opinion on the threat posed by Iran as the nation's top intelligence official. She repeatedly said it was Trump's decision to strike, not hers.

"It is not the intelligence community's responsibility to determine what is and is not an imminent threat," she said.

Gabbard's departure follows Trump having ousted Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem in late March, in the midst of mounting criticism over her leadership of the department — including the handling of the administration's immigration crackdown and disaster response.

The second Cabinet member to leave was Attorney General Pam Bondi, in response to growing frustration over the Justice Department's handling of files related to Jeffrey Epstein. And Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer resigned in April, after being the target of various misconduct investigations.

Lukas, who will be taking over for Gabbard, was an intelligence aide to the acting director of national intelligence, Ric Grenell, in 2020 during Trump's first term. A former policy analyst at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, he also served as deputy senior director for Europe and Russia at the National Security Council in the final year of Trump's previous administration.

A surprising choice for the job

A military veteran but without any intelligence experience, Gabbard was a surprising choice for director of national intelligence. She ran for president in 2020 on a progressive platform and her opposition to U.S. involvement in foreign military conflicts.

Citing her military experience, she argued that U.S. wars in the Middle East had destabilized the region, made the U.S. less safe and cost thousands of American lives. Gabbard later dropped out of the race and endorsed the ultimate winner, President Joe Biden.

Two years later, she left the Democratic Party to become an independent, saying her old party was dominated by an "elitist cabal of warmongers" and "woke" ideologues. She subsequently campaigned for several high-profile Republicans and became a contributor to Fox News.

She later endorsed Trump, who also was a strong critic of past U.S. wars in the Middle East and campaigned on a pledge to avoid unnecessary wars and nation-building overseas.

Iran caused early tensions

But friction with the president started soon after he began his second term and tapped Gabbard to lead ODNI, which was set up after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to improve coordination between the nation's intelligence agencies.

Shortly after taking on the job and before this year's war, Gabbard testified before lawmakers that there was no intelligence suggesting Iran was seeking to develop nuclear weapons. After Trump launched attacks on Iranian nuclear sites last June, he said Gabbard was wrong and that he didn't care what she said.

She appeared to be back in Trump's good graces when she took a lead role in Trump's effort to relitigate his 2020 election loss to Biden. She appeared at an FBI search of election offices in Fulton County, Georgia, even though her office was created to focus on foreign espionage, not state elections.

Gabbard made big changes in her time in office

Gabbard vowed to eliminate what she said was the politicization of intelligence by government insiders.

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But she quickly used her office to support some of Trump's most partisan arguments — that he won the 2020 election.

She also worked to undermine the results of earlier investigations into Trump's ties to Russia.

In her year on the job, Gabbard oversaw a sharp reduction in the intelligence workforce, as well as the creation of a new task force that she charged with considering big changes to the intelligence service.

Earlier this year, an intelligence sector whistleblower filed a complaint that Gabbard was withholding intelligence for political reasons, a complaint that prompted calls from Democrats for Gabbard's resignation.

Gabbard, 44, was born in the U.S. territory of American Samoa, raised in Hawaii and spent a year of her childhood in the Philippines. She was first elected as a 21-year-old to Hawaii's House of Representatives but had to leave after one term when her National Guard unit deployed to Iraq.

As the first Hindu member of the House, Gabbard was sworn into office with her hand on the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu devotional work. She was also the first American Samoan elected to Congress.

During her four House terms, she became known for speaking out against her party's leadership. Her early support for Sen. Bernie Sanders' 2016 Democratic presidential primary run made her a popular figure in progressive politics nationally.

NATO allies bewildered by Trump's about-face on US troop moves in Europe

By MARK CARLSON and LORNE COOK Associated Press

HELSINGBORG, Sweden (AP) — NATO allies and defense officials expressed bewilderment Friday at U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that he would send 5,000 U.S. troops to Poland just weeks after ordering the same number of forces pulled out of Europe.

The apparent change of mind came after weeks of statements from Trump and his administration about reducing — not increasing — the U.S. military footprint in Europe. Trump's initial order set off a flurry of action among military commanders and left allies already doubtful about America's commitment to Europe's security to ponder what forces they might have to backfill on NATO's eastern flank with Russia and Ukraine.

Earlier this month, the Trump administration said it was reducing levels in Europe by about 5,000 troops, and U.S. officials confirmed about 4,000 service members were no longer rotating into Poland from Germany. The dispatch to Germany of U.S. personnel trained to fire long-range missiles was also halted.

But in a post on Truth Social on Thursday, Trump said he would now send "an additional 5,000 Troops to Poland," citing his strong ties with Polish President Karol Nawrocki, whom Trump endorsed in elections last year.

"It is confusing indeed, and not always easy to navigate," Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard told reporters Friday at a meeting she was hosting of her NATO counterparts, including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Ministers from the Netherlands and Norway were sanguine about Trump's latest move, as was Latvian Foreign Minister Baiba Braže, who said allies knew the U.S. troop "posture was being reconsidered, and now there is no change of posture. For now."

U.S. defense officials also expressed confusion. "We just spent the better part of two weeks reacting to the first announcement. We don't know what this means either," said one of two officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters.

But Rubio said Washington's allies understand that changes in the U.S. troop presence in Europe will come as the Trump administration reevaluates its force needs. "I think there's a broad recognition that there are going to be eventually less U.S. troops in Europe than there has historically been for a variety of reasons," he said.

US withdrawal followed German criticism

The latest surprise came despite a U.S. pledge to coordinate troop deployments, including one from NATO's top military officer, U.S. Gen. Alex Grynkeiwich, on Wednesday.

Trump's initial announcement that he would withdraw troops came as he fumed over remarks by Ger-

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man Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who said that the U.S. was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership and criticized what he called a lack of strategy in that war.

Trump told reporters that the U.S. would be cutting even more than 5,000 and also announced new tariffs on European cars. Germany is the continent's biggest auto producer.

Rubio insisted that Trump's decision "is not a punitive thing. It's just something that's ongoing."

The US has a commitment to keep at least 76,000 troops in Europe

About 80,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Europe. The Pentagon is required to keep at least 76,000 troops and major equipment on the continent unless NATO allies are consulted and there is a determination that such a withdrawal is in U.S. interests.

The withdrawal of 5,000 troops might drop numbers below that limit.

But Trump's latest post suggests that troop numbers in Europe would not change. Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski welcomed the decision to send more forces to his country, saying it ensures that "the presence of American troops in Poland will be maintained more or less at previous levels."

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte also welcomed the move. On Thursday, before Trump took to Truth Social again, Rutte had underlined that it was important for Europe to take care of its own security. "We have a process in place. This is normal business," he told reporters.

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, meanwhile, U.S. officials briefed the allies on the Pentagon's aims for its commitments to the NATO Force Model, which involves contingency planning for Europe's defense in the event of serious security concerns. It was widely expected that a further reduction of U.S. forces would be coming.

Asked whether any cuts were announced, Rutte said: "I'm afraid it's much more complicated than that." He said the procedure "is highly classified" and declined to give details.

Rubio played down concerns about a shift in U.S. force levels in Europe, saying: "Every country has to constantly reevaluate what their needs are, what their commitments are around the world, and how to properly structure that."

Trump's Cuba strategy echoes his Venezuela playbook. But there are key differences

By BEN FINLEY, MATTHEW LEE, FARNOUSH AMIRI and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration's strategy against Cuba is looking a lot like the playbook for Venezuela: An oil blockade, a growing U.S. military presence, federal charges and repeated threats of intervention.

But similar pressure campaigns do not equal similar results, experts say, even if President Donald Trump has often warned that "Cuba is next."

"President Trump viewed the Venezuelan intervention as a fantastic success," said Brian Finucane, a senior adviser with the International Crisis Group and a former State Department lawyer. "And he's sought to replicate the Venezuela model elsewhere, including in Iran. But obviously, Cuba, like Iran, is a very different country than Venezuela."

If the U.S. were to depose Cuba's leadership, there is no obvious successor who would work with the Trump administration, Finucane said. That is unlike Venezuela, where the U.S. captured leader Nicolás Maduro in January and his second in command, Delcy Rodríguez, stepped in with U.S. approval and remains in power.

Cuban officials, who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, say "there is no Delcy in Cuba."

The number of American forces in the Caribbean Sea now is also smaller and far less foreboding than the massive military buildup off Venezuela's coast in the months ahead of Maduro's ouster, Finucane said. Plus, an indictment against a 94-year-old former Cuban leader — Raúl Castro — is less impactful than charging Venezuela's sitting president with drug trafficking and using that to justify his capture.

Here are some of the similarities and differences between the U.S. pressure campaigns against Ven-

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ezuela and Cuba:

Trump has threatened military action

Like other conflicts, Trump began to lay the groundwork for U.S. intervention in Venezuela — and the possibility for Cuba — with escalating threats months before military action took place.

He has warned the leaders of the Caribbean countries to either get in line or face American might. Weeks before the audacious military operation that plucked Maduro from power, Trump stood with his top national security advisers in Florida and made what would be one of his last public threats to the autocratic leader.

"If he wants to do something, if he plays tough, it'll be the last time he'll ever be able to play tough," Trump said in December. Just after Maduro was whisked to the U.S. to face trial, Trump shifted his focus to other countries in the region, namely Cuba, as being next on his list.

"Cuba is ready to fall. Cuba looks like it's ready to fall. I don't know if they're going to hold out," he told reporters on Jan. 5.

He went on to threaten tariffs on any country that sells or supplies oil to Cuba and said the U.S. might have "the honor of taking Cuba" following military operations in Venezuela and Iran.

On Thursday, he repeated his threats, calling Cuba "a failed country."

"Other presidents have looked at this for 50, 60 years, doing something," Trump said. "And, it looks like I'll be the one that does it."

US squeezes countries with oil embargoes

U.S. oil embargoes on Cuba and Venezuela have been designed to have the same impact: Putting intense pressure on ruling elites — but push diametrically opposite means to achieve those goals.

With Venezuela, the Trump administration was targeting the country's oil exports, aiming to starve the Maduro government of revenue. After Maduro's ouster, the focus shifted to denying Venezuela the ability to export oil to certain countries — primarily Cuba, from which it did not receive cash payments — and forcing it to agree to U.S. conditions for such shipments.

Much of Venezuela's crude is now or will soon be sent through U.S. refineries.

With Cuba, the embargo is aimed at starving the energy-strapped country of oil imports, although the U.S. has allowed some limited shipments to arrive on the island, which recently declared it had run out of reserves. The oil embargo, an extension of the broader U.S. blockade on Cuba in place for decades, has made it far more difficult for the government to provide electricity and gasoline to its citizens.

The measures could go too far, Finucane said, and prompt many Cubans to head 90 miles north for Florida in makeshift boats as many did in the 1990s.

"President Trump especially cares about immigration. And if they push too hard on Cuba and destabilize the island, there's the possibility of some kind of a refugee crisis," he said.

US brings charges against figures in power

The Justice Department had charged Maduro with narco-terrorism conspiracy and other counts during Trump's first term in 2020.

The case was used to justify capturing Maduro, who is now in New York awaiting trial and has pleaded not guilty. The move changed Venezuela's relationship with the United States, which has allowed the sale of previously sanctioned Venezuelan oil to U.S. companies and on global markets, a massive shift after largely blocking dealings with Venezuela's government and its oil sector for years.

The immediate aim of the indictment against Castro over the 1996 shootdown of civilian planes flown by Miami-based exiles is to take another step up the ladder of escalation in the Trump administration's pressure campaign, said William LeoGrande, a professor specializing in Latin American politics at American University in Washington.

But he said that capturing Castro following charges that include murder and destruction of an airplane would not change the operations of the Cuban government.

Castro "still has influence and the leadership seeks his opinion on major decisions, but he is not running the government on a day-to-day basis," LeoGrande said.

Building up a US military footprint in the region

In the months before Maduro was captured, the U.S. dispatched a fleet of warships to the waters near

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Venezuela in what became its largest military buildup in Latin America in generations.

The nation's most advanced warship, the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, was notably rerouted from Europe to join in the operation. Three amphibious assault ships carried around 2,000 Marines as well as helicopters and Osprey aircraft.

U.S. forces spent months attacking small boats accused of smuggling drugs in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean — and still are carrying out those strikes — while fighter jets flew over the Gulf of Venezuela.

The actual mission to capture Maduro involved more than 150 aircraft launched across the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. military now has a smaller force in the Caribbean Sea, which still includes two amphibious assault ships with Marines onboard. It touted the arrival of the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and accompanying warships on the same day the charges against Castro were announced this week.

But the Nimitz is on its last ever tour, taking part in maritime exercises in the region, before being decommissioned.

"They're very different situations, and it's very difficult to see similar outcomes," Finucane said. "A snatch-and-grab raid against Raúl Castro or someone who's actually in a leadership position doesn't seem like it's going to have the same outcome in Cuba as in Venezuela."

FDA staff blindsided by move allowing more e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches onto US market

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senior officials in the Food and Drug Administration's tobacco center were blindsided by a recent decision that opens the door to allowing more unauthorized electronic cigarettes and nicotine pouches onto the U.S. market, The Associated Press has learned.

The guidelines, posted days before former FDA Commissioner Marty Makary resigned, will allow companies to launch certain nicotine-based products before they've been fully vetted by regulators.

Some FDA officials tasked with enforcing vaping regulations were not consulted on the changes and only learned of them the night before the document was published earlier this month, according to two staffers who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential agency matters. The document's sudden appearance sparked internal confusion about how the policy came about and who authorized it, the staffers said.

In recent days, agency officials have convened hourslong meetings grappling with how to implement the six-page memo, which breaks with longstanding FDA policy requiring scientific verification of health benefits for smokers before any new products are introduced.

It's highly unusual for the FDA to draft new policies without input from the staffers who oversee them.

"It begs the question of whether the true subject matter experts may have actually opposed this policy and were ordered to do it anyway," said Mitch Zeller, who retired as the FDA's tobacco director in 2022. "And that goes to the ability of the public to have trust and faith in institutions like FDA."

The vaping guidelines bypassed a federally required period that allows for public comment and revisions. Instead, the FDA published them as a finalized policy hours after media reports surfaced that President Donald Trump had approved a plan to fire Makary. He resigned from the FDA last week following months of complaints from industry lobbyists close to the White House.

A Health and Human Services spokesperson did not address the origins of the guidance in a written statement.

"This approach strengthens protections against youth nicotine addiction while supporting evidence-based alternatives for adult smokers seeking to move away from combustible tobacco products," Andrew Nixon said in a statement.

Messages seeking comment from Makary were not immediately returned Friday.

FDA eyes new approach to vaping flavors

Most health researchers agree that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than traditional cigarettes,

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and the products have been promoted in the U.K. and other European countries as an alternative for smokers.

In the U.S., the FDA has struggled to police the market for over a decade. The agency has authorized vaping products from five companies while rejecting millions of other applications, mainly due to the presence of fruit, candy and other sweet flavors that were deemed appealing to kids. And yet, unauthorized vapes are widely available.

But recent changes in Washington and across the U.S. reflect a shifting landscape.

Underage vaping among U.S. teenagers has fallen to its lowest level in more than 10 years, following the disruptions of the pandemic and new state and federal restrictions.

Trump came to power last year after vowing to "save" the vaping industry. Major tobacco companies, such as Reynolds American and Altria, have contributed millions to political action committees supporting Trump and other administration priorities, including Trump's inauguration and his proposed White House ballroom. Both companies have invested heavily in e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches, in addition to cigarettes.

Despite the influence campaign, vaping issues took a backseat at FDA under Makary. On rare occasions when Makary addressed e-cigarettes, he voiced skepticism about the data showing declining underage use.

Even as FDA staffers were poised to shift course on flavors, Makary and other agency leaders intervened.

In February, one of Makary's deputies blocked an FDA decision that would have authorized the first fruit-flavored vapes, according to internal memos later released by the agency. FDA reviewers had determined the products were unlikely to be used by children when combined with digital age-verification technology.

The mango- and blueberry-flavored products were finally OK'd during Makary's last full week heading the FDA, just days before the agency posted the new guidelines allowing unauthorized nicotine products.

Under the guidance, the FDA is supposed to publish a list of e-cigarettes and pouches that are not yet authorized but will be subject to "enforcement discretion," meaning they can be sold without regulators targeting them for removal. While there is no public list of products that might qualify, the policy is expected to allow for new flavors that had previously been blocked by regulators.

"What we're seeing is a broader opening up and responsiveness to flavored products by the agency both in terms of a stronger appetite for authorization but also less appetite to take enforcement action against flavored products," said Brian King, former FDA tobacco director now with the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

US stores are already packed with illegal flavored vapes

While FDA's new approach breaks with precedent, it may have little impact on the flavors already available at gas stations, vape shops and convenience stores.

The U.S. market has been flooded for years by unauthorized vapes containing mango, gummy bear, strawberry and dozens of other flavors.

These disposable e-cigarettes filled the vacuum left by Juul when it pulled its high-nicotine flavored products from the market, after they became ubiquitous in U.S. schools beginning around 2017. Currently, the company only sells FDA-authorized e-cigarettes in tobacco and menthol flavors.

Juul and other companies now see the chance to directly compete with disposable Chinese vapes, which by some estimates account for 80% of U.S. sales.

"The choice we face is not whether flavored vaping products should be sold in the U.S. They already are," said Robyn Gougelet, a Juul vice president. "The choice is whether those products should be regulated and responsibly marketed — or illegal, untested, and smuggled into the country."

Rather than targeting flavors, the FDA said its new enforcement approach will focus on vapes with specific youth-appealing features, such as designs that resemble children's toys.

"The reality is they're just deluged by illegal products coming across the border," said Jonathan Foulds, a tobacco-addiction specialist at Penn State University. "So they're making it clear what should be common sense: 'We're going to focus on the worst actors.'"

New policy may create winners and losers among vaping firms

It's far from clear whether FDA's new approach will be embraced by the vaping industry at large, which

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includes multinational tobacco companies alongside hundreds of smaller companies selling imported devices from China.

As written, the guidance suggests only e-cigarettes that are under "scientific review" will qualify to launch without FDA authorization. Only a small number of applications typically reach that stage, which requires detailed health data on smokers who switch to the new product, King noted.

"This is certainly going to benefit the larger tobacco companies, which have the resources to get far enough into the application review process and thus won't be prioritized for enforcement," King said.

Lobbyists for smaller companies say it's too early to tell whether the policy will be help or hinder their clients, but they fear being left behind.

"The big companies would love nothing more than to see their largest swath of competitors out of the marketplace," said Tony Abboud of the Vapor Technology Association.

Senators from both parties push Hegseth for action on Ukraine aid

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan group of senators is pushing back on delays by the Department of Defense in sending \$600 million in security aid to Ukraine and other allies in eastern Europe, dispatching a letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Friday that calls for the funding to be disbursed.

Friction has grown between Congress and the Trump administration in recent weeks as lawmakers from both sides of the aisle push for updates on what has happened with \$400 million in Ukraine aid and \$200 million more for defense programs in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The money was allocated by Congress last year. Even Republican lawmakers have aired their frustration as President Donald Trump's administration disengages with Ukraine and other European allies.

"Ukraine has persistently and bravely repelled a four-year Russian onslaught, but its military needs and deserves continued American support," said Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin and Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley in the joint letter.

Republican Sens. Kevin Cramer and Thom Tillis and Democratic Sens. Michael Bennet and Catherine Cortez Masto also signed onto the letter.

During a congressional hearing over three weeks ago, Hegseth had told lawmakers that the Ukraine funding had been "released" and a spending plan would soon be sent to lawmakers. But the senators say the Pentagon failed to meet the promised May 15 deadline for that plan.

"Any further delays — particularly as the Department reportedly plans troubling U.S. troops withdrawals from the region — risks our ability to adequately deter Russia," the senators said.

The letter was the latest sign of Senate Republican frustration with the Trump administration after a week in which the president endorsed the primary challenger to Texas Sen. John Cornyn, angering many.

In a back-and-forth with the president on social media Friday, Tillis blamed Trump's advisors for a list of policies he says are hurting the GOP politically, including, "Firing our very best generals and not holding Putin accountable for his systematic kidnapping, rape, torture, and murder of Ukrainian civilians."

Several Republicans have also taken issue with Hegseth's firing of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George last month. George had pushed to reconfigure the Army's battlefield strategy to incorporate drone warfare and had worked with Ukraine's military to learn from its experience.

In the House, a Democratic-backed proposal to impose sweeping sanctions on Russia and send \$1 billion in military aid to Ukraine has gained momentum as well. While that aid package is unlikely to become law, it's helping fuel a renewed push among lawmakers for supporting Ukraine's war effort.

The \$400 million in security aid for Ukraine is relatively small compared to the multi-billion dollar aid packages that Congress initially approved in the months and years immediately following Russia's invasion, but for lawmakers, the provision has also taken on significance as a sign of their continued support.

Warsh is sworn in as the Fed chair after Trump's bid for greater control over the independent bank

By WILL WEISSERT and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday oversaw the White House swearing-in of the new Federal Reserve chair and said he would like Kevin Warsh's help in stimulating the economy even as he tried to emphasize that the nation's central bank would remain independent.

Trump spent months criticizing Warsh's predecessor, Jerome Powell, for being reluctant to cut interests rates, with the Republican president arguing that lower borrowing costs would provide an economic boost. By taking the unusual step of holding the ceremony in the East Room and not the Fed, Trump made clear his pleasure that Warsh is now in charge.

The war with Iran has caused gas prices to spike, unsettled financial markets and driven inflation concerns across the economy. Those developments have led to recent doubts about whether Warsh might heed Trump's calls and push the Fed to lower rates.

Still, Trump said he had faith that Warsh would prioritize a strong economy.

"Thankfully, unlike some of his predecessors, Kevin understands that when the economy is booming, it is, that's a good thing," the president said. Trump said it was not necessary "to go crazy. Just let it go. We want it to boom."

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas administered the oath of office. Also on hand were House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., Justice Brett Kavanaugh, CIA Director John Ratcliffe and Cabinet members.

"I expect he will go down as one of the truly great chairmen of the Federal Reserve that we've ever had," Trump said of Warsh.

Republican President Ronald Reagan swore in Alan Greenspan as Fed chair at the White House in 1987. Republican President George W. Bush attended the 2006 ceremony at central bank headquarters when Ben Bernanke became chair.

But having the event at the White House raises more questions about the Fed's independence at a time when Trump has constantly sought to bend the independent central bank to his will.

Trump's Department of Justice began an investigation into Powell and the Fed's extensive building renovations. That drew backlash from lawmakers and the department scrapped the investigation. The Fed's internal watchdog is now handling the matter. Powell's term as chair ended last week, though he has opted to remain on the Fed board for now.

Trump made a point of saying during his remarks, "Honestly, I really mean this. This is not said in any other way: I want Kevin to be totally independent."

"I want him to be independent and just do a great job," Trump said. "Don't look at me, don't look at anybody. Just do your own thing."

In the next breath, however, Trump said that "in the eyes of many, the Fed has lost its way in recent years" under his predecessor, Democratic President Joe Biden. Trump also suggested that Warsh is looking to lead policies that promote "positive economic growth" and that doing so did not have to mean higher inflation.

Trump also noted that the stock market had risen Friday. "That means they like you," he said of Warsh.

Warsh once harshly criticized Fed's policies, including its low interest rate policies coming out of the coronavirus pandemic, which he says contributed to the largest U.S. inflation spike in four decades in 2021-2022. More recently, he has sometimes echoed Trump's demands for lower rates.

Warsh says productivity gains from artificial intelligence will help the economy grow more quickly without spurring inflation, enabling the Fed to reduce borrowing costs. Many Fed officials, however, disagree that AI's development will support rate cuts, especially because the technology has also been blamed for large-scale layoffs in the computer sector and other parts of the economy.

On Friday, Warsh promised "to lead a reform oriented Federal Reserve, learning from past successes and mistakes, both escaping static frameworks and models and upholding clear standards of integrity and performance."

He told Trump that he believes "these years can bring unmatched prosperity that will raise living standards for Americans from all walks of life. And the Fed has something to do with it."

Warsh further noted that the Fed's mandate "is to promote price stability and maximum employment. When we pursue those aims with wisdom and clarity, independence and resolve, inflation can be lower; growth, stronger; real take home pay, higher and America can more prosperous."

As he left the ceremony, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent reinforced Trump's message, predicting to reporters that Warsh will "do the right thing for inflation and growth."

Kyle Busch was more than a villain and the greatest NASCAR driver of his generation

By MARK LONG AP Sports Writer

Kyle Busch grew to expect — even appreciate — the boos.

The driver nicknamed Wild Thing, Outlaw, Rowdy and KFB over his 26-year NASCAR career was more comfortable than anyone might imagine with a checkered flag in one hand and fans jeering all around. He leaned into the villain role as the wins mounted — and boy did they — and even started encouraging his haters, trying to get the howling to a fever pitch before delivering his signature bow.

It was Busch at his best.

And it's the way he should be remembered.

The two-time Cup Series champion, who won more races than anyone across NASCAR's three national series, died Thursday at age 41. Tributes poured in, with many echoing the sentiment that racing had lost one of its fiercest competitors.

Busch was that — and so much more.

He was arguably the greatest driver of his generation, displaying unrivaled success. He notched a combined 234 wins — 63 in the top-tier Cup Series and another 171 in NASCAR's two feeder series, O'Reilly (102) and Trucks (69).

He was a devoted husband, a side that became public when he and wife Samantha chronicled their struggle to become parents and later founded the Bundle of Joy Fund, which is dedicated to advancing access to in vitro fertilization (IVF) care and providing support so others don't have to navigate infertility alone. The fund has raised more than \$2 million and has celebrated the birth of 111 babies.

He was a loving father, who tirelessly tried to teach his 11-year-old son, Brexton, everything he could about racing and even sold his successful Truck Series team to help raise money to support his son's budding career.

He was even one of NASCAR's most popular — some would say polarizing — drivers thanks to his long-time M&M's sponsorship. Kids flocked to Busch and his colorful No. 18 Toyota at Joe Gibbs Racing.

Older fans might not have been as supportive, and it was evident every time Busch took the checkered flag and responded to booing with a mocking bow.

"This is a devastating loss and one that is hard for the NASCAR community to process. Kyle was a fierce competitor who demanded the very best from himself each time he put on the helmet," four-time Cup Series champion Jeff Gordon said. "As teammates, I saw firsthand the passion and intensity he brought to the sport every single day."

"He was a champion and a prolific racer who made a tremendous impact on NASCAR and was a lifelong advocate for all forms of motor sports. But beyond the track, he loved his family deeply and was incredibly proud of Samantha, Brexton and Lennix."

Busch had become sort of a sympathetic figure in recent years, a series champion in the worst slump of his career and a surefire Hall of Famer who never got to celebrate a Daytona 500 victory. Both skids bothered him, no doubt, the first more than the second.

Busch's last Cup Series victory came at World Wide Technology Raceway in Illinois in 2023. Busch won three of the first 15 races that season, his first with Richard Childress Racing. RCR had built the Next Gen

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prototype, so the team had an early advantage with the new car.

But once everyone else caught up, Busch and RCR lagged behind. He was winless in his final 105 starts and changed crew chiefs twice this season while searching for a winning combination. The most trying part: Feeling like he was letting Brexton down week after week.

"It's no secret, right? And seeing my son and his passion that he has; he really is probably my biggest cheerleader," Busch said at Daytona International Speedway in February. "And he wants to see me run well. He wants to see me win races. He wants to celebrate in victory lane like he sees other drivers' kids being able to do.

"So there's nothing more that drives me every single weekend than seeing him see me and be proud of me."

Busch died after being hospitalized with a severe illness. It came three days before he was to compete in the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Busch was testing in the Chevrolet racing simulator in Concord, North Carolina, on Wednesday when he became unresponsive and was transported to a hospital in Charlotte, several people familiar with the situation told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details have not been disclosed by Busch's team or family.

Busch's death came 11 days after he radioed his crew near the end of a Cup Series race at Watkins Glen and asked a doctor to give him a "shot" when he finished the race. Busch had been struggling with a sinus cold exacerbated by the intense G-forces and elevation changes at the New York road course, broadcasters said.

Busch finished that race eighth. He competed at Dover last weekend and — maybe fittingly — won his last Trucks Series start for Spire. He then finished 17th in the NASCAR All-Star race, his final event.

Busch stormed into the Cup Series in 2005 and won Rookie of the Year honors. He was at Hendrick Motorsports at the time, a job he was fired from to make room for Dale Earnhardt Jr.

His career, though, was as much defined by post-race fights, feuds with other drivers and outlandish behavior as all the trips to victory lane.

Nonetheless, Busch won championships in 2015 and 2019 for Joe Gibbs Racing. His first title came after he missed part of the season while recovering from two broken legs. He was let go from JGR in 2022 after losing his M&M's sponsor and with the team looking to make room for Ty Gibbs, the grandson of team owner Joe Gibbs.

Busch landed at RCR, where he ranked a disappointing 24th in Cup Series points after 12 races. But an indelible image was his final victory. And he celebrated that Truck Series win with two bows amid a scattering of boos.

"You take whatever you can get, man," Busch said. "You never know when the last one is going to be, so cherish them all — trust me."

Paxton makes his final pitch in the Texas Senate race against Cornyn, buoyed by Trump's endorsement

By JESSE BEDAYN and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DRIPPING SPRINGS, Texas (AP) — Republican Ken Paxton is riding high as the Texas attorney general heads into the final days of the U.S. Senate primary runoff against incumbent John Cornyn, now with the weight of President Donald Trump's backing.

"I don't know if y'all noticed this, but Donald Trump endorsed me," Paxton told a small rally in a town outside Austin, inciting whoops and applause from the crowd.

Tuesday's election has drawn national attention and gobs of money. It also has become the latest campaign in which Trump is encouraging voters to oust a politician who has displeased him and elect a challenger more aligned with the president. That effort has been largely successful for Trump. Earlier this week, U.S. Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky lost in the GOP primary to Ed Gallrein, Trump's handpicked candidate. Trump also has succeeded in defeating incumbents in Louisiana and Indiana.

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Paxton has been turning his focus to the Democratic nominee, state Rep. James Talarico. Paxton opened his event Thursday with attacks on Talarico, a sign of his confidence heading into the runoff.

Paxton then gave a biography of his political life and tried hammering home the reason he says he should be the nominee: his history of lawsuits defending conservative values. It is the type of resume that endears Paxton to the "Make America Great Again" faithful, some of his supporters said.

"He's a fighter, he's a person of action, he's proven that as attorney general," said Jeffrey Sonnier, 72, who attended the rally and echoed the sentiment of many supporters at the event.

As for Cornyn, said Sonnier, "he's inactive for five years and digs out to become a supposed active Republican MAGA person every six years."

Who is closer to Trump?

Paxton's campaign said Thursday that it's pulling negative ads against Cornyn. Instead, starting after Trump's Tuesday endorsement, the campaign and a super political action committee that supports his candidacy began airing separate ads promoting Trump's favor.

Cornyn's campaign and groups supporting him, however, were outspending the pro-Paxton groups 3-to-1 and had reprised an ad they began airing last year noting Cornyn's support for Trump's agenda and featuring video clips of Trump praising Cornyn.

"He's called me a friend, and that's no surprise because I've supported him and his policies, you may have seen a commercial or two to that effect, 99.3% of the time," said Cornyn in a video posted to X from a recent event.

Cornyn has also long worked to shift the race to focus not on fidelity to the president but on character.

The campaign has leaned heavily into messaging about Paxton's past, which includes an alleged affair and an impeachment for corruption in which Paxton was acquitted.

If Paxton is the nominee, that will be litigated in a general election against Talarico, where voters will be less "willing to overlook all the corruption, the self-dealing and the scandals," Cornyn argued at a recent campaign event. "Ken Paxton would hand it to (Democrats) on a silver platter."

Paxton supporters at his Thursday rally shrugged off the accusations.

"He's had his flaws, but so have we; we all make mistakes," said Daniel Vega, 18, adding, "He's repented, let's move on."

A contest where spending reached beyond \$100 million

Through this week, Cornyn's campaign and groups supporting it will have spent roughly \$90 million in advertising, according to the ad-tracking firm AdImpact. That includes more than \$20 million since the March 3 primary election.

Paxton's campaign and the single super PAC have combined to spend roughly \$10.5 million on advertising, with roughly \$6.1 million since that contest.

The ads have flooded voters.

"The commercials are leading me against Paxton, that he might be a little crooked," said Gail Licea, 74, a retired registered nurse, who attended a Cornyn event before Trump's endorsement. Then again, she said, "I've been led to believe that sometimes John Cornyn doesn't back President Donald Trump, and that concerns me."

The advertising has been so concentrated, it was unclear how much the late pivot by the groups would affect Tuesday's outcome, said Wayne Hamilton, former executive director of the Texas Republican Party.

"There is so much noise out there right now," said Hamilton, who is an adviser to Gov. Greg Abbott and is unaffiliated with either of the Senate candidates. "I don't know how any one message is going to break through."

Pushed to the limit, Republicans show rare defiance to Trump's demands

By LISA MASCARO and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The day arrived when the Senate just said, No.

President Donald Trump's political revenge tour met its potential match this week as angry, upset Republican senators, pushed to a breaking point by his seemingly insatiable and outlandish demands — particularly a \$1.776 billion fund for Jan. 6 rioters and others he believes were wrongly prosecuted — did the unthinkable.

They simply refused, closed up shop, and went home.

The moment was as rare as it was daring, a sudden flex from the Congress that has become a shell of its former self as a coequal branch, the Republican majority almost always more willing to accommodate the Republican president than to confront him.

The result left in shambles, for now, the GOP's top priority of passing a roughly \$70 billion budget package that would fuel Trump's immigration and deportation operations for the remainder of his presidential term, into 2029. The voting was postponed until Congress resumes next month, blowing Trump's June 1 deadline to have it on his desk.

Trump, asked during an event at the Oval Office if he was losing control of the Senate, shrugged.

"I really don't know," the president said.

It all caps a bruising week after the president swept midterm primary elections, taking down one Republican after another — Sen. Bill Cassidy in Louisiana and Rep. Thomas Massie in Kentucky, and endorsing the challenger to Sen. John Cornyn in Texas — turning the might of his Make America Great Again movement against those who have stuck to their own views, rather than yield to his.

And it wasn't just the Senate. In the Republican-led House, for the first time this year, enough GOP lawmakers broke ranks to signal support for a war powers resolution from Democrats designed to halt Trump's military action in Iran. House Speaker Mike Johnson postponed voting until he could ensure an outcome that avoids confronting the president.

The endgame leaves Trump and the party exposed in new ways.

While the president is winning with his handpicked candidates, many are untested heading into general elections this fall. Trump's own approval rating sits at a low point, and he is spending his political capital, alienating his would-be allies and threatening to derail GOP priorities as they try to persuade voters to keep them in office.

Anger in the Senate over Trump's 'payout for punks'

Trump's announcement of nearly \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund for those the president believes were wrongly prosecuted came with little warning, and less support, blindsiding senators already fuming over his push for \$1 billion to provide security for his new White House ballroom.

The audacity of the arrangement — Trump negotiating a settlement to his own lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service that would set up the compensation fund for those perceived to be wrongly prosecuted — proved too toxic for the Senate to bear.

"Under what circumstances would it ever make sense to provide restitution for people who were either pled guilty or were found guilty in a court of law?" steamed Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C.

Tillis derided the White House move as "stupid on stilts" and a "payout for punks." Trump fired back Friday morning, accusing Tillis of "screwing the Republican Party" in a lengthy social media post.

GOP Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the former majority leader, who tends to keep his own counsel, issued his own a statement in the aftermath.

"So the nation's top law enforcement official is asking for a slush fund to pay people who assault cops? Utterly stupid, morally wrong — Take your pick," McConnell said.

The political calculations were becoming apparent: The more Trump bullies and badgers the Congress, the more they are left questioning what they have to gain, or lose, from trying to appease him, especially for those already heading for the exits.

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"I think it's hard to divorce anything that happens here from what's happening in the political atmosphere around us," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche met for hours behind closed doors with senators over the compensation fund, but left without a resolution.

Afterward, Thune said the discussion likely left the administration's team with "an appreciation for the depth of feeling on the issue."

Trump's victories come at a cost

While Trump-backed candidates defeated Republican incumbents in the House and Senate this week, showing his command of the party faithful, some in Congress saw the defeats of their colleagues differently.

"You don't want to have a totally loyal party that's in the minority. And that's maybe where we're headed," said Republican Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska, who is retiring at the end of his term.

It began Saturday, when Cassidy, who voted to convict Trump in his Senate impeachment trial after Jan. 6, lost his primary to a Trump-backed challenger in Louisiana. He returned to Washington days later noticeably more eager to criticize Trump — and more willing to vote against him.

"Congress should hold the executive branch accountable," Cassidy said Monday. A day later, he joined Democrats in voting to rein in the war in Iran.

Then came Trump's endorsement of Ken Paxton over Cornyn in Texas, a move many Republicans viewed as both personal and politically reckless. Trump said Cornyn "was not supportive of me when times were tough."

"There's a lot of folks in our conference that are disappointed because we appreciate working with John Cornyn," said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D.

Others worried the divisive Texas primary could jeopardize a seat Republicans cannot afford to lose.

"He made the wrong pick," Tillis said. "It's going to be a lot more expensive to hold that seat."

Frustration extends beyond the Senate

In the House there were also signs of Republican discontent.

Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., joined Democratic Rep. Tom Suozzi in introducing legislation that would block taxpayer dollars from being used for Trump's proposed "anti-weaponization" compensation fund.

Fitzpatrick also drew Trump's ire after the president complained publicly that the congressman "likes voting against Trump" and warned, "You know what happens with that?"

But Fitzpatrick insisted the backlash inside the party was driven by policy concerns, not political fear.

"People have the right to free speech in this country," Fitzpatrick said. "But what we do here is all about policy."

At the same time, Fitzpatrick and Republican Michigan Rep. Tom Barrett were expected to side with Democrats in voting for the war powers resolution to rein in Trump's military campaign in Iran.

GOP leaders pulled the measure at the last minute when it became clear Republicans lacked the votes to defeat it.

Bacon, who spent some 30 years on active duty in the Air Force, said he believed much of the Republican pushback to the war could be resolved if Trump consulted Congress more.

"You sit down with somebody, and work with them instead of threatening, bully and yelling," said Bacon. "It don't work."

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Today in History: May 23

Outlaws Bonnie and Clyde killed in police ambush

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, May 23, the 143rd day of 2026. There are 222 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 23, 1934, bank robbers Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were shot to death during a police ambush in Bienville Parish, Louisiana.

Also on this date:

In 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary, aligning with the Triple Entente of Russia, France and the United Kingdom.

In 1939, the diesel-electric submarine USS Squalus sank during a test dive in 240 feet (73 meters) of water off the coast of New Hampshire, killing 22 crew members. (Thirty-three survivors were rescued from the vessel in a 13-hour operation using a newly developed diving chamber the following day).

In 1945, Nazi official Heinrich Himmler killed himself while in British custody in Lüneburg, Germany.

In 1984, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop issued a report saying there was "very solid" evidence linking cigarette smoke to lung disease in non-smokers.

In 2013, the Boy Scouts of America announced it would remove membership restrictions based on sexual orientation, while maintaining a ban on openly gay Scout leaders. (The ban on gay Scout leaders and organization employees was lifted two years later.)

In 2015, supporters of marriage equality in Ireland celebrated as referendum results showed a constitutional amendment in favor of recognizing same-sex marriage passing by a nearly 2-to-1 margin.

In 2018, NFL owners approved a new policy allowing players to protest during the national anthem by staying in the locker room but forbidding players from sitting or taking a knee if they're on the field.

In 2021, a cable car taking visitors to a mountaintop view of northern Italy's Lake Maggiore plummeted to the ground when a cable snapped, killing 14 people.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Joan Collins is 93. Tennis Hall of Famer John Newcombe is 82. Chess grand master Anatoly Karpov is 75. Comedian-TV host Drew Carey is 68. Comedian-actor Lea DeLaria is 68. Author Mitch Albom is 68. Actor Melissa McBride is 61. Singer-songwriter Maxwell is 53. "Jeopardy!" host Ken Jennings is 52. Singer-songwriter Jewel is 52. Filmmaker Ryan Coogler is 40. Singer-songwriter Sarah Jarosz (juh-ROHZ') is 35.