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Wednesday, May 27

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, wild rice, oriental blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

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

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

Thursday, May 28

Senior Menu: Swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls

James Valley Telecommunications Annual Meeting

Friday, May 29

Senior Menu: Lemon baked fish, parsley buttered potatoes, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls

Saturday, May 30

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

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls



Sunday, May 31

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., at Zion, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Groton Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; Cody Swanson Piano Recital, 3 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

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

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

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1440

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

Great British Bake-Off

An early-season heat wave broke the UK's all-time May temperature record yesterday, as Western Europe continues to swelter under extreme heat. London's Kew Gardens hit 95.2 degrees Fahrenheit, topping the previous record of 91.4 degrees set in 1922 and 1944.

The heat wave is being driven by a heat dome, a high-pressure system that traps and compresses hot air like a lid on a pot and can linger for days or weeks. The effects are especially dangerous in the UK, where only about 5% of homes have air conditioning and much of the infrastructure was built for cooler weather. The average high temperature for London in late May is around 68 degrees, and much of Western Europe is facing temperatures 18 to 27 degrees above normal.

London also recorded a rare "tropical night," with temperatures staying above 68 degrees. Temperatures should ease but remain above average for the rest of the week.

From Warheads to Reactors

The Trump administration yesterday announced it is considering giving five companies access to radioactive plutonium from Cold War-era nuclear warheads for conversion into nuclear power plant fuel. If finalized, the deal would mark the first time the US has given the weapons-grade metal to private companies.

The Energy Department stores over 50 tons of plutonium left over from weapons programs in guarded facilities. The material can trigger explosive chain reactions, is highly toxic if inhaled, and remains radioactive for tens of thousands of years. The DOE had plans to dilute and bury much of the stockpile, but energy companies say plutonium could serve as a valuable domestic fuel source for the nation's nuclear fleet. The Trump administration last year set a goal of quadrupling US nuclear power capacity by 2050 to meet rising energy demands.

As of 2023, the US gets roughly 27% of its enriched uranium—the most common fuel for nuclear reactors—from Russia.

Spelling Bee Begins

The 98th Scripps National Spelling Bee kicked off yesterday in Washington, DC. Semifinals take place today; the winner will be crowned tomorrow, winning \$52.5K.

The competition dates back to 1925, when 11-year-old Frank Neuhauser spelled gladiolus—a type of flower—correctly. Since then, 111 champions have been crowned, owing to several two-way ties and an eight-way tie in 2019 (some competitions were skipped during World War II and the COVID-19 pandemic). All contestants must be younger than 15 and in eighth grade or below. Since 2003, the pronouncer has been 1980 winner Jacques Bailly, who makes eye contact with contestants and practices each word beforehand.

Nearly 250 kids have gathered for the chance to be this year's top English speller, from all 50 states and DC, three US territories, and five countries. Of them, 13% have been trained by Scott Remer.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

US men's national soccer team announces 2026 World Cup roster.

Supreme Court declines to intervene in NFL discrimination suit led by former Miami Dolphins head coach and now Minnesota Vikings defensive coordinator Brian Flores; case to proceed to trial.

Saxophonist Sonny Rollins, whose career spanned seven decades and more than 60 albums, dies at age 95.

LA Philharmonic hires British conductor (and pilot) Daniel Harding as music director.

Drake breaks Michael Jackson's record for most No. 1 songs on Billboard Hot 100 by solo male artist.

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Science & Technology

Memory decline after menopause may be linked to estrogen decline in brain tissue, possibly helping explain why nearly two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's are women.

Two-legged crocodile ancestor sheds light on an experimental phase of evolution, when several unrelated species independently developed similar survival strategies; the newly discovered creature resembles a modern-day ostrich (More, w/image)

Scientists use AI model to analyze tumor DNA, offering enhanced insights into how a patient's cancer might respond to different treatment options.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq +1.2%).

Micron Technology hits \$1T market cap for first time, fueled by AI demand for its memory chips.

American Airlines selects SpaceX's Starlink for in-flight Wi-Fi on more than 500 narrowbody aircraft beginning in Q1 2027.

Eli Lilly to buy three vaccine developers in deals valued at roughly \$4B.

Oil giant BP ousts chairman after less than a year in the role, citing governance and conduct issues.

Politics & World Affairs

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) defeats incumbent Sen. John Cornyn(R) in primary runoff.

Chemical tank explodes at pulp and paper mill in Washington state, releasing "white liquor"; at least one person confirmed dead and nine others missing as of this writing, with authorities saying there is no known threat to the public.

President Donald Trump to hold Cabinet meeting at White House, canceling original planned trip to Camp David in Maryland; follows US strikes on Iran late Monday.

JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 69th ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, May 28th
Groton Area High School Arena
11:30am Registration & Lunch
12:30pm Meeting

- Membership Gift
- Serving Ken's Roast Beef, Mashed Potatoes & Gravy, Sides & Dessert
- Many Door Prizes, Including a \$500 Credit

Our Groton office will be closed 11am-2pm.



 **NVC**
Built by James Valley
Telecommunications

Tigers Qualify Deep Roster for State Track and Field Meet

Groton Area will be sending a strong group of athletes to the South Dakota State Track and Field Meet this week, with both the Tiger boys and girls squads qualifying numerous individuals and relay teams for the three-day event at Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls.

The State Track and Field Meet will be held Thursday through Saturday, May 28-30.

The Groton Area boys qualified athletes in sprints, distance races, relays and field events, while the girls qualified competitors in hurdles, distance events, relays and the javelin.

Leading the boys qualifiers is senior Jayden Schwan, who earned state berths in four events, including the 800-meter run, 1600-meter run, 3200-meter run and the sprint medley relay. Fellow senior Keegen Tracy also qualified in four events, advancing in the 100-meter dash, 200-meter dash, 400-meter dash and sprint medley relay.

Senior Lincoln Krause qualified as part of three relay teams, including the 4x100-meter relay, 4x200-meter relay and sprint medley relay.

Sophomore Ethan Kroll advanced in the triple jump and three relay events, including the 4x200-meter relay, 4x400-meter relay and 4x800-meter relay. Sophomore J.J. Muller qualified in the 4x100-meter relay, while sophomore Jace Johnson advanced in both the 4x400-meter relay and 4x800-meter relay.

Freshman Jordan Schwan will compete in four relay events, including the 4x100-meter relay, 4x200-meter relay, 4x400-meter relay and sprint medley relay. Freshman Riley Shellenberger qualified in the 4x800-meter relay.

Eighth graders Ryder Schwan and Kyson Kucker also earned trips to state. Ryder Schwan qualified in the 4x100-meter relay and 4x200-meter relay, while Kyson Kucker advanced in the 4x400-meter relay and 4x800-meter relay.

On the girls side, senior Rylee Dunker qualified in the javelin and as part of the 4x100-meter relay team.

Junior McKenna Tietz qualified in four events, including the 100-meter hurdles, 300-meter hurdles, 4x200-meter relay and 4x400-meter relay. Junior Kella Tracy also qualified in four events, advancing in the 4x100-meter relay, 4x200-meter relay, 4x400-meter relay and sprint medley relay.

Junior Taryn Traphagen earned state berths in the 4x200-meter relay, 4x400-meter relay and sprint medley relay, while junior Ashlynn Warrington was named as an alternate.

Sophomore Makenna Krause qualified in four relay events, including the 4x100-meter relay, 4x200-meter relay, 4x400-meter relay and sprint medley relay.

Sophomore Ruelle Gilbert advanced in the 800-meter run, 1600-meter run and sprint medley relay after improving her qualifying position during the final week of the season.

Freshman Raquel Tracy rounded out the girls qualifiers after helping the 4x100-meter relay team earn a state berth.

Groton Area athletes will now turn their attention to Howard Wood Field, where they will compete against the top Class A athletes from across South Dakota in pursuit of state medals and podium finishes.

Groton Graduate Returns Home After Years Teaching in Thailand

by Dorene Nelson

Darren Dennert, a 1989 graduate of Groton High School, is back in Groton with his seven-year-old daughter Erin. They are currently in an apartment until he purchases a house.

"I've been employed by the Groton School District since February as a paraprofessional in Special Education in the middle and high school," he explained. "I will also continue in that position next year as my daughter Erin enters second grade."

"I started my higher education in the University of North Dakota, planning to receive an aviation degree," Dennert smiled. "However, I worked in a few retail stores and various businesses which helped me to come up with the idea of working somewhere in Southeast Asia," he explained. "My goal was to live economically and save most of my salary for retirement!"

"I ended up living and working in Thailand for thirteen years where I taught math and English to Thai students," Dennert said. "Teaching in Thailand was quite an amazing experience. Children were trained very young about self-control and respect for their elders, which helped with classroom management, but kids will still be kids."

"Teachers in Thailand have only twenty-five contact hours a week with the students they have in their four classes a day," Dennert said.

"Living and working in Thailand was where I met Aonnarin, my wife and the mother of our daughter Erin," he smiled. "I was the head of primary at the school where I worked for ten years."

"Thailand is considered more of a second world country," he explained, "where you can live on a lot less income than in the United States. I was able to accumulate savings since the cost of living was very reasonable."

"My wife and I decided to move to the United States in order to give our daughter the best possible education she could get," Dennert said. "Erin has dual citizenship, so she is allowed to come to America without a problem. That does not, however, apply to Aonnarin."

"I planned to come to the United States first and then get my family moved here," he said. "While working on their move here, I helped my sister Lisa and her husband Jeff Howard on the farm. They have been the best support in helping my family get here!"

"Getting my wife to America is not easy!" Dennert stated emphatically. "The immigration process is complicated and slow. The immigration services have to examine very carefully the many documents necessary for admission into the country."

"I expect it will take a year and a half to two years to get my wife through the paperwork and the immigration process," he sadly admitted. "Immigration into the United States is slow and very thorough. They want to be sure that the applicant can and will support themselves once they are admitted!"

"Erin and I have been separated from Aonnarin for eight months already! This does give us appreciation of others who are separated from their loved ones for a lengthy period," Dennert said.



Darren, Aonnarin and Erin



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State kicks off \$3 million fundraising campaign for Waubay fish hatchery upgrades

BY: JOHN HULT



From left, Nathan Poole of Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kevin Robling and Gov. Larry Rhoden stock fish into Forsberg city pond in Watertown on May 26, 2026. (Courtesy of Gov. Larry Rhoden's office)

Rhoden's office)

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden appeared Tuesday in Watertown to launch a \$3 million fundraising campaign for upgrades to an eastern South Dakota fish hatchery.

Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery in nearby Waubay supplies walleye, yellow perch and muskellunge to urban, community and rural lakes and ponds across the state. It's the state's primary producer of walleye.

Federal funding will cover \$3.5 million for upgrades to Blue Dog, where most of the infrastructure is more than 40 years old. License fees and fundraising will pay the remainder of the \$8 million projected cost, with a goal of \$3 million in private donations.

"The more we raise, the faster we can complete the project and the lower the total cost will be," said Nick Harrington, spokesman for the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

The Blue Dog upgrades will include the installation of 15 recirculating aquaculture systems, each consisting of multiple indoor water tanks, and an additional building to hold them. The project also includes piping for a fourth well to serve the hatchery, a new water filtration system to deal with high levels of iron in the area's well water, an additional structure and a liquid oxygen system.

Game, Fish and Parks Wildlife Director Tom Kirschenmann told lawmakers on the Legislature's budget-setting committee that the upgrades will allow for the production of more and larger fish.

"We would have the ability to produce a 10-inch largemouth bass and put it in a pond for somebody to catch," Kirschenmann told the committee in late January.

Rhoden's kickoff event took place at Forsberg city pond in Watertown, one of the community ponds stocked by the state.

The state has two other hatcheries, McNenny State Fish Hatchery in Spearfish and Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery in Rapid City. Both sites have undergone renovations in recent years. Blue Dog was built in 1982. The project represents the first modernization overhaul in its 44-year history.

More information on the project is available on the Game, Fish and Parks website.

COMMENTARY

Victory doesn't always go to the loudest candidate

Rounds' 2002 primary win could hold a lesson for this year's GOP governor race

by Dana Hess

It was Primary Election Day, June 4, 2002, and I had things pretty well covered for the Wednesday edition of the Pierre Capital Journal. This was back in the day when newspapers still had staffs. I had three reporters assigned to cover various local elections, figuring I would rely on coverage from The Associated Press for the statewide races. Thinking I had everything handled, my son and I settled in Tuesday night to watch the Twins play Cleveland.

It turned into one of those games that Twins fans dream about. For one night, the Twins' roster turned into a hitting machine instead of just a proofreader's nightmare — Koskie, Pierzynski, Mientkiewicz. Pitches must have looked as big as grapefruit for Twins hitters, and most of them fell unmolested in the outfield. It looked like it was going to be a great night for baseball.

And then the phone rang.

The caller was Joe Kafka, one of the two Associated Press reporters stationed in Pierre. But he wasn't in Pierre. Joe, along with the entire AP staff, was in Sioux Falls. They predicted that was where the action would be for the end of the three-way race for the Republican nomination for governor. Mark Barnett and Steve Kirby both had their campaign headquarters in Sioux Falls. Those two candidates had been slinging mud at each other for weeks, and the smart money said that one of them would get the nomination.

Well, the smart money was wrong. Joe explained that projections showed that Mike Rounds was going to get the nomination. Rounds, who had run a more low-key campaign, was at his election headquarters in Pierre. The AP didn't have anyone in town to take a picture of the likely nominee. Joe asked if I could get a picture of Rounds and transmit it to the Sioux Falls bureau.

I realized that the Capital Journal, as an AP member, had an obligation to take the picture. I could handle that part, but as far as transmitting it to the AP, that was foreign to me. Forgive my ignorance, but I always had people.

One of those people was my wire editor. I corralled him at his night job at the public library. I wouldn't say he was eager to return to the newspaper office when his shift at the library was done, but he said he would be there.

Rounds' campaign headquarters was in a former gas station. The price must have been right on the rent and there was plenty of parking. The only downfall was the disappointment in folks who didn't realize



From left, Gov. Larry Rhoden, state House Speaker Jon Hansen, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and businessman Toby Doeden participate in a Republican gubernatorial debate on April 27, 2026, at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/

South Dakota Searchlight)

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there was a new tenant when they wandered in to buy lottery tickets. Taking the picture was easy enough. Rounds saw my camera and knew right away what I was after. We chatted a while and I even got enough material for a decent feature story about the Election Night mood at his headquarters.

Honest, there is a point to this stroll down Memory Lane. This year's GOP gubernatorial primary may have an outcome as surprising as the election in 2002. If anything, Mike Rounds' victory showed that voters don't necessarily gravitate to the candidate who's the loudest or has the most negative things to say about his opponent.

Something like that may be playing out in this year's primary. All of the candidates have taken some shots, but it's obvious that U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson has really zeroed in on Gov. Larry Rhoden, emphasizing whenever he can the governor's signature on three recent bills allowing for higher sales taxes. For his part, Rhoden seems befuddled about why anyone would label his plan for lowering property taxes as a tax increase.

Their exchange took a sinister turn when Rhoden told a gathering of journalists at the South Dakota NewsMedia Association convention that through an intermediary, Johnson warned him not to get in the race lest he be swamped with negative ads financed by a dark money political action committee. Johnson has denied the allegation, though he admits to agreeing with what the ads say about Rhoden.

While they slug it out like Barnett and Kirby, it offers one of the other candidates in the race the chance to pull a Rounds-like upset.

From the way he has gained in polling — from next to nothing to the middle of the pack — that upset role could go to state Speaker of the House Jon Hansen, who has been good about staying on message. Republican voters may turn to a candidate who emphasizes his Christian and conservative values if they tire of all the Johnson-Rhoden mudslinging.

Tougher to figure is the voters' reaction to Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden. A new KELO poll has Doeden leading Johnson 26% to 23%. That goes to show that if you spend \$4 million of your own money, you may end up within the margin of error. The KELO poll is in contrast with the latest South Dakota News Watch-Chiesman Center for Democracy poll that found Doeden's unfavorable rating at 35%.

As we slog through the month of May toward the June 2 primary election, these candidates should keep in mind the lessons from the past. It seems that picking a fight isn't the only way to win an election. South Dakota voters proved that in 2002.

As for the trip down Memory Lane, it was a good night for the AP. Relying on a technologically challenged editor, they got the photo of Rounds they needed in time for the morning newspapers. It was a good night for Rounds, who got the nomination. It was a good night for the Twins, who beat the Indians 23-2.

Primary Election Night 2026 will be a good night for one of the GOP candidates for governor (unless nobody gets 35%, in which case there'll be a top-two runoff eight weeks later). Like the election in 2002, it's not assured that the nomination will go to the candidate who insists on making the most noise.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Snowbirds allege poll workers changed them to federal voters without instruction to prove residency

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A couple who spend winters in Arizona and the rest of the year in South Dakota said they were given a federal-only ballot and denied a state-local ballot when they tried to vote in person last week at the Minnehaha County administration building.

Instead of retaining their Hartford home when they retired and started traveling south for the winter, Steve Nolte and Kelly Stewart sold their home four years ago, bought a recreational vehicle, and parked it year-round at a South Dakota lakeside resort. They use a mail-forwarding service in Sioux Falls, and they're registered to vote in Minnehaha County.

Since January, state law requires that anyone who lists only a mail forwarding address or post office box — without describing where they actually live — be registered as a federal-only voter when they register or request an absentee ballot. That means the person can only vote in federal contests such as presidential and congressional races — not other statewide, legislative, county, city or local races or ballot questions. The law was motivated partly by some legislators' opposition to full-time RVers voting in local and state races.

But poll workers didn't instruct Nolte and Stewart to fill out a form with a description of their living situation before voting, they said later after learning what should have happened. They also cited a lack of communication about the law and how it would impact voters like them.

The two have been registered at their mail-forwarding address in Sioux Falls since 2023 and said they have not made any updates since.

"I felt like our voting rights were taken away from us," Stewart said.

Stewart said she was shocked and frustrated she wasn't allowed to vote in the Republican governor primary race or legislative primary races. Her ballot had two races on it: primary races for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives.

Poll workers noticed the mail-forwarding address and told the couple they could only vote a federal ballot, then changed their voter status in the system without the couple's permission, Nolte said. The couple said they voted before the voter registration deadline for the June 2 election, so they could have updated their voter registration if needed.

Minnehaha County Auditor Leah Anderson, whose office manages elections in the county, said the couple should have described their address on the envelope that in-person advance voters receive at the polling place and place their ballots in. Stewart and Nolte said they were not instructed to fill out any information



The Minnehaha County Administration Building in Sioux Falls.

(Photo by John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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on the envelope, until a poll worker told them to sign it before casting their ballot.

Anderson said she was "not immediately available" at the time to guide Stewart and Nolte through the process.

Nolte said the situation is evidence of a lack of "thorough training" regarding mail-forwarding voters and the new law.

The Secretary of State's Office, which oversees elections at the state level, did not respond to questions from South Dakota Searchlight.

On Thursday, The Dakota Scout published an article in which Anderson and the secretary of state responded to concerns that auditors were incorrectly switching voters at mail-forwarding addresses to federal-only voters. Anderson told the Sioux Falls newspaper that her office is following the secretary of state's guidance.

State Elections Director Christine Lehrkamp responded with a press release later that day saying "the Secretary of State's office NEVER said we support the auditor in Minnehaha County and what she does concerning Federal-Only ballots."

Lehrkamp added that absentee voters must submit an absentee ballot application and describe where they live in order to vote in state and local races. She did not describe how the law is applied to in-person advance voting.

Nolte and Stewart faced discrimination based on their address, said Amber Hobert, president of DakotaPost, which is the mail forwarding business where the couple are clients.

"There's an idea that none of our customers come here and have a vested interest in South Dakota," Hobert said. "We do have people who live here, but you're treating an entire group of people based on what you believe to be, rather than actually giving people an opportunity to meet the requirements of the law."

Stewart said she understands the purpose of the law.

"We do know people in the RV park down in Arizona that we call 'fake South Dakota residents,'" Stewart said. "We would hope they wouldn't vote here because they don't spend time here. But we pay taxes on food and clothing and other things here."

The RV park where Stewart and Nolte spend summers and early fall is in Lake County. They plan to register for the November general election using their rented space near Lake Madison as the description of their habitation, listing their private mailbox as their mailing address.

That guidance should have reached voters before they showed up at the polls, said state Rep. Erik Muckey, D-Sioux Falls. His district includes Nolte and Stewart, as well as all registered voters at DakotaPost.

At least 1,500 South Dakota residents have been reclassified as federal-only voters since January, many without realizing it. The Secretary of State's Office's online Voter Information Portal — where voters can check their registration status, find their polling place and download a sample ballot — does not show whether a voter is registered as federal-only. A voter can glean if they are federal-only if they attempt to view a sample ballot.

Muckey said the Secretary of State's Office has not done enough to explain the options available to voters beyond posting the relevant laws on its website and adding the residency warning to election forms.

"Before the general election, the secretary of state has a responsibility when it comes to the rules around how to demonstrate residency, change their voting status and go back to being a local voter," Muckey said. "How is this going to be communicated with the voting base?"

Muckey said the underlying law needs work, too.

"The only way to tackle this is to talk again about what defines residency and how we make sure people using P.O. boxes as registered voting addresses have a real ability to prove residency," Muckey said. "If that's not clear, we won't have this problem just now but for many elections to come."

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.

Democratic state AGs say staff excluded from Vance anti-fraud meeting; Jackley attends

South Dakota's attorney general participates in roundtable, says he's requested a special federal prosecutor to help investigate fraud cases

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — A handful of Democratic state attorneys general said Tuesday that expert officials from their offices were denied access to a major White House anti-fraud meeting convened by Vice President JD Vance and attended by Republican AGs.

Two dozen Democratic attorneys general had earlier declined invitations for their own attendance at the White House anti-fraud roundtable, citing extremely short notice and a lack of an agenda in a letter to Vance, who has helmed the Trump administration's sweeping anti-fraud effort.

Instead, some sent top officials from their offices to Washington. Democratic attorneys general in California, New York and New Jersey said at a press conference later Tuesday that officials from their states were not allowed to attend the anti-fraud meeting.

New York Attorney General Letitia

James said officials from Minnesota, Massachusetts, Maryland and Nevada were also turned away and that part of the reason apparently had to do with the officials' titles.

"They gave various reasons that conflicted, and that didn't really make sense," James said. "At the end of the day, the message is, is, that there were experts who have been working on complex fraud cases, that have worked in our respective offices over the year — they have engaged in successful criminal prosecutions, investigations and settlements resulting in millions and millions of dollars, and they were all turned away, despite the fact that they had RSVP'd on Friday evening, and in some cases on Saturday."

California Attorney General Rob Bonta, who led the press conference, said "we won't be used as props in Vance's political performance."

Bonta was joined by James, along with Hawaii Attorney General Anne Lopez, New Jersey Attorney General Jennifer Davenport and Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul.

"The truth is, Democratic AGs have recovered billions of taxpayer dollars, secured criminal convictions and implemented reforms to strengthen the security of our programs," Bonta added.

The California attorney general noted that "the short notice we were given sends a clear message that we were either an afterthought or we weren't really welcome."

Though the initial invitation was made to AGs only, exceptions were made for chiefs of staff or deputy attorneys general, according to an individual familiar with the fraud roundtable.



Vice President JD Vance, center, arrives at a roundtable anti-fraud meeting with Republican attorneys general in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House campus on May 26, 2026, in Washington, D.C. South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley is pictured second from the right. (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

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Lower ranking staff members, both Republican and Democrat, did not participate and guidelines were made clear in advance of the roundtable, that individual said, speaking on background.

Trump administration anti-fraud campaign

At the meeting, Vance and administration officials gave brief remarks before ushering out the press so that they could have “the real conversation.”

Minnesota has taken center stage in the administration’s efforts to combat alleged fraud. Just last week, administration officials announced they were charging 15 people in the state for alleged Medicaid fraud schemes totaling millions of dollars in intended loss.

In a list provided by the Republican Attorneys General Association ahead of the event, the attorneys general slated to attend the Vance meeting included: Tim Griffin of Arkansas; Raúl Labrador of Idaho; Todd Rokita of Indiana; Brenna Bird of Iowa; Kris Kobach of Kansas; Russell Coleman of Kentucky; Lynn Fitch of Mississippi; Austin Knudsen of Montana; Mike Hilgers of Nebraska; Drew Wrigley of North Dakota; Andy Wilson of Ohio; Gentner Drummond of Oklahoma; Marty Jackley of South Dakota; and Derek Brown of Utah.

Bird, of Iowa, said in a press release that she attended the fraud task force meeting with other AGs to “discuss collaborative efforts between the White House and state attorneys general on combating benefits fraud, as well as the resources needed by attorneys general to fight fraud in their states.”

She added, “When bad actors commit fraud—whether it’s against the government, against businesses, or against individuals, the American taxpayer always ends up on the hook. I’ve been fighting to protect Iowans against fraud for the last four years as attorney general, and I don’t intend to stop.”

Dems complain about short notice

The two dozen state Democratic attorneys general had written to Vance earlier Tuesday that while they “would appreciate the opportunity to engage in serious discussions, the invitation was provided with less than one business day’s notice with no agenda,” per a letter obtained by States Newsroom.

The group added that “this short notice does not match the spirit of collaboration that has long defined our joint efforts with federal partners.”

POLITICO, which first reported on the letter and the Democrats’ choice to not partake in the meeting, noted that Republican attorneys general were invited days earlier and initially the event was only supposed to include them.

“As I’ve said repeatedly, this does not need to be — this should not be — a partisan effort,” Vance said during the roundtable.

“Everybody should care about fraud, everybody should care about rooting out fraud, everybody should care about saving the American taxpayers money, and importantly, everybody should care about actually protecting the programs that only work and are only properly funded if the money funding those programs isn’t being stolen by fraudsters.”

The vice president said at the meeting that representatives from the attorneys general in Connecticut and Oregon were in attendance.

In a statement after the meeting, the executive director of the Republican Attorneys General Association bashed Democrats.

“While Republican Attorneys General are aggressively fighting fraud, waste, and abuse, Democrat AGs like Keith Ellison in Minnesota and Letitia James in New York knowingly aid and abet scams and fraud in their states,” said Adam Piper, the executive director. “Republican AGs are thrilled to roll up our sleeves and work with JD Vance, Republican AG staff alum Andrew Ferguson, Scott Brady, and the White House Task Force to save taxpayers billions of dollars and deliver maximum accountability. Vice President Vance is right – this is not a partisan issue. However, historical Democrat inaction speaks volumes.”

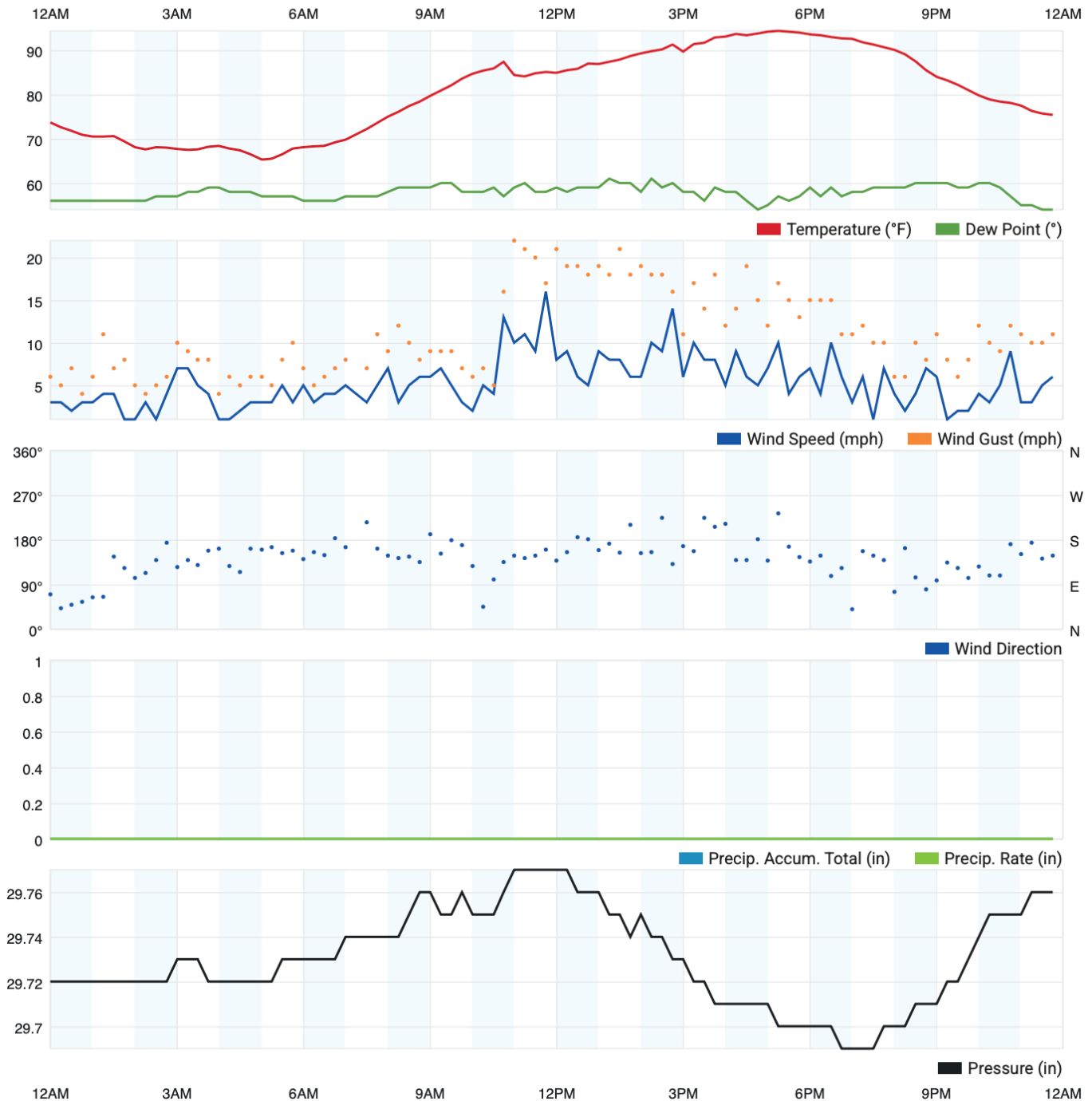
Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom’s Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 26, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

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Today



High: 93 °F

Hot

Tonight



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Clear

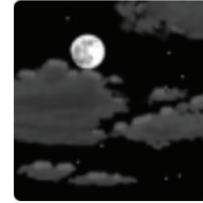
Thursday



High: 93 °F

Hot

Thursday
Night



Low: 60 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Friday



High: 91 °F

Hot

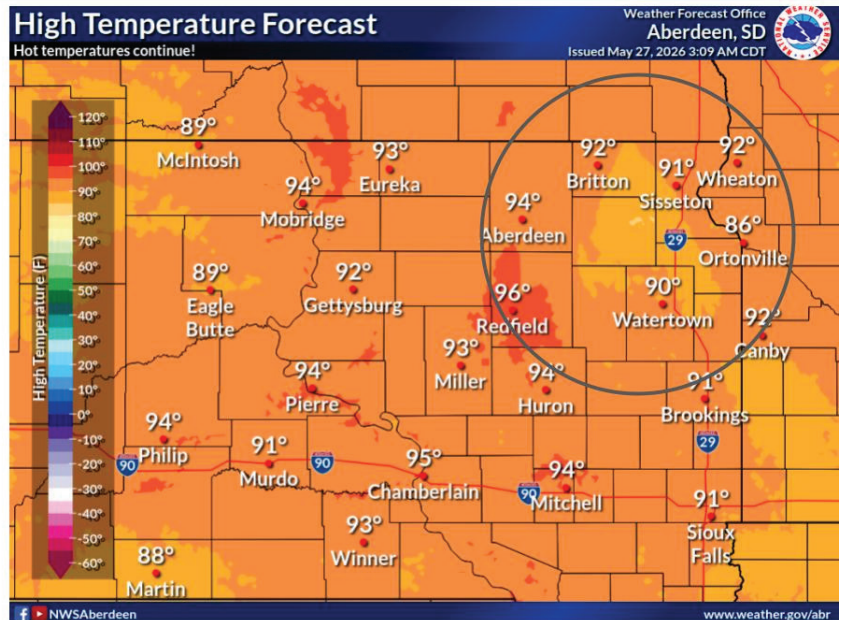


Hot Temperatures Continue Today

May 27, 2026
3:34 AM CDT

Much above normal temperatures

- High temperatures in the upper 80s to mid 90s, nearly 20 degrees above normal!
- Expect these temperatures through Saturday.
- Very small chance (10-15%) for a stray thundershower this afternoon in the circled area.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A hot air mass will remain in place over the region through Saturday, with temperatures rising into the upper 80s to mid 90s each day. Precipitation chances will be limited and spotty until Saturday, when better chances for rainfall will arrive for central SD. Although, there may be a few pop-up small thundershowers across northeast SD and west central MN this morning, then again this afternoon. No severe weather is expected at this time.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 94 °F at 5:16 PM

Low Temp: 65 °F at 5:00 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 10:48 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 2018

Record Low: 28 in 1907

Average High: 75

Average Low: 49

Average Precip in May.: 2.88

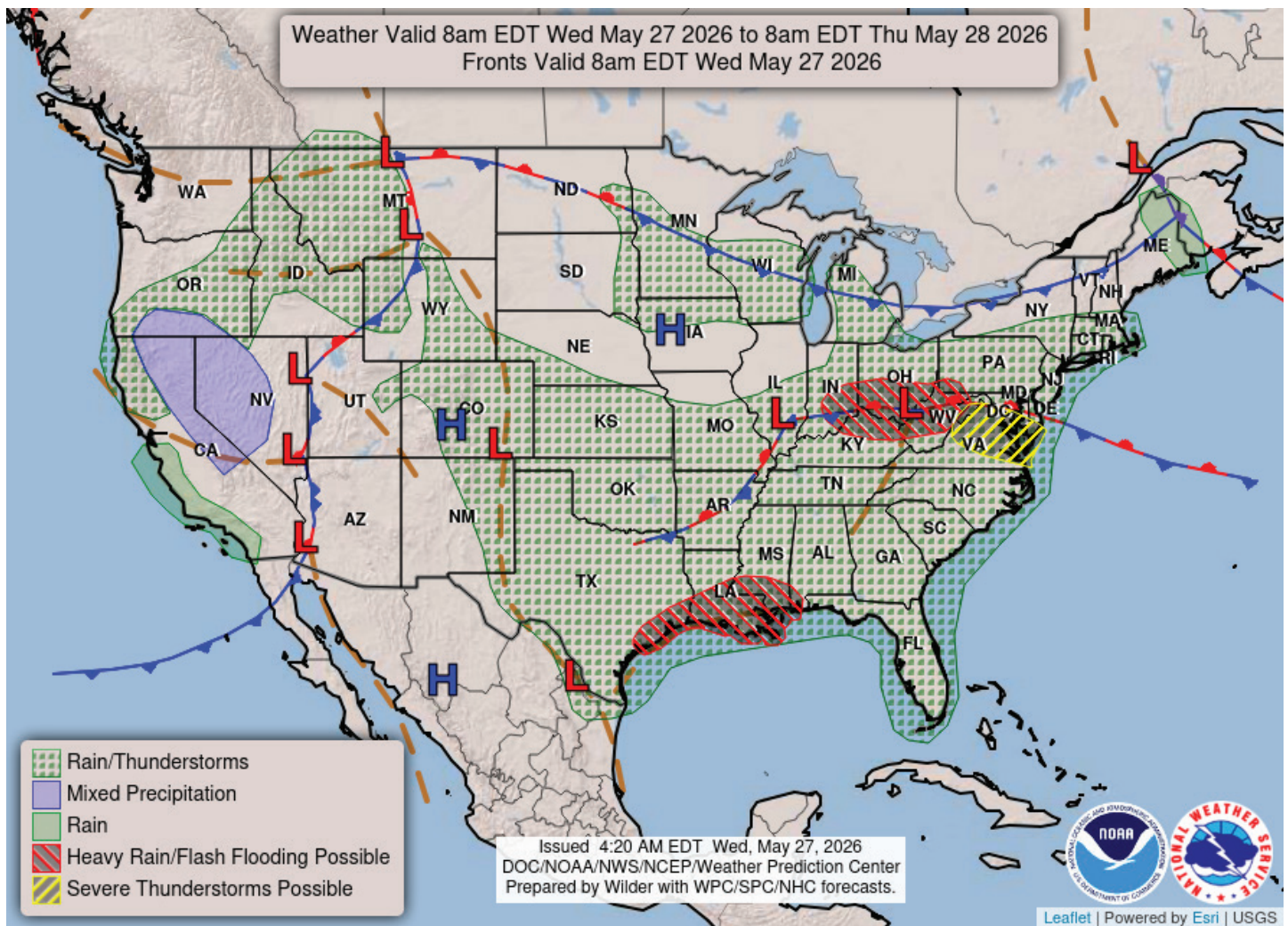
Precip to date in May.: 1.73

Average Precip to date: 6.85

Precip Year to Date: 4.85

Sunset Tonight: 9:08 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 am



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Today in Weather History

May 27th, 1942: A short estimated F2 touchdown uprooted 27 trees on the western edge of Bryant in Hamlin County. One barn was destroyed.

May 27th, 1996: On May 26th, 4 to 6 inches of rain fell in 24 hours over the lower Bad River Basin. Also, 3 to 5 inches of rain fell over much of Western South Dakota. This runoff caused the Bad River at Fort Pierre to crest at 26.25 feet or about 5 feet above flood stage late on the 27th before falling back below flood stage on the 30th. The entire length of the Bad River Road from U.S. Highway 83 near Fort Pierre to U.S. Highway 14 near Midland was closed to all except local traffic on the 27th. Twenty-five to 35 volunteers were filling sandbags all day on the 27th around two homes along the river. Most of the damage was associated with flooding of agricultural land and some county roads. One resident along the river said the river was the highest it has been in 32 years.

1896 — A massive tornado struck Saint Louis, MO, killing 306 persons and causing thirteen million dollars damage. The tornado path was short, but cut across a densely populated area. It touched down six miles west of Eads Bridge in Saint Louis and widened to a mile as it crossed into East Saint Louis. The tornado was the most destructive of record in the U.S. up until that time. It pierced a five-eighths inch thick iron sheet with a two by four inch pine plank. A brilliant display of lightning accompanied the storm. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Severe thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail at Crane, hail up to three and a half inches in diameter at Post, and grapefruit size hail south of Midland. Five days of flooding commenced in Oklahoma. Thunderstorms produced 7 to 9 inches of rain in central Oklahoma. Oklahoma City reported 4.33 inches of rain in six hours. Up to six inches of rain caused flooding in north central Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Sunny and warm weather prevailed across much of the nation to kick off the Memorial Day weekend. Afternoon thunderstorms in southern Florida caused the mercury at Miami to dip to a record low reading of 69 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Ten cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 90s. Lakeland, FL, reported a record high of 99 degrees, and Biloxi, MS, reported a temperature of 90 degrees along with a relative humidity of 75 percent. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from north central Texas to the Central Gulf Coast Region. Severe thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes, and there were eighty-one reports of large hail or damaging winds. Late afternoon thunderstorms over southeast Louisiana produced high winds which injured twenty-seven persons at an outdoor music concert in Baton Rouge, and high winds which gusted to 78 mph at the Lake Ponchartrain Causeway. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotion

King of Kings

**Surrendering to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords
doesn't remove your freedom but, rather, is how to finally find it.**

Revelation 19:11-16: 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Scripture declares Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This isn't merely a title—it's the reality of who He is. The same Jesus who entered Jerusalem humbly on a donkey will one day return in power and glory. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

When Christ returns, He won't come alone. Believers and angels will accompany Him on that great day. If you have placed your faith in Jesus, you share in His victory and will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). This is the fulfillment of God's promise that His people will participate in His kingdom.

One day Jesus will rule on this earth in perfect righteousness. But even now, He comes to reign in the heart of every believer. Salvation is just the beginning of all the blessings the Lord has in store for us.

Who rules your life? Who guides your decisions and directs your path? The Creator has a plan and purpose for your life, and He longs to reveal them to you as you walk with Him in trust and surrender.

When we submit to Christ's loving authority, we discover freedom—not restriction. Then we can experience the joy of living, as God intended for His children.

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:

05.26.26

18 30 39 52 56 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 40 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.26.26

1 5 49 51 59 7

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$331,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 25 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.25.26

16 23 27 36 41 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$27,820,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.23.26

2 5 7 10 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$104,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.25.26

2 20 31 33 38 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.25.26

17 32 48 60 64 10

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$154,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

NASA lays out moon base plans with landers, buggies and drones at the top of the list

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA is already ordering landers, rovers and drones for a sprawling moon base, less than two months after the Artemis II's record-breaking lunar flyaround.

The space agency outlined the first phase of its moon base plans on Tuesday, awarding hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts to four U.S. companies.

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin will provide a pair of landers to deliver moon buggies to the lunar surface, at a spot near the moon's south pole. These so-called lunar terrain vehicles will be built by Astrolab and Lunar Outpost. Firefly Aerospace, which landed successfully on the moon last year, will deliver the first drones to the moon.

All this hardware is ideally supposed to arrive before the first Artemis astronauts land on the moon, planned for as early as 2028.

During April's Artemis II mission, four astronauts flew around the moon, traveling deeper into space than the Apollo moon crews did during the late 1960s and early 1970s. For next year's Artemis III, another team of astronauts will practice docking NASA's Orion capsule in orbit around Earth with the lunar landers being developed for crews by Blue Origin and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

NASA is targeting Artemis III for mid-2027, with a landing by two astronauts following as soon as 2028. The moon base's second phase, from 2029 into the early 2030s, will start building up the permanent infrastructure, including a power grid. As for when the base will be ready to support astronauts for extended periods in specialized permanent habitats, that's expected sometime in the 2030s, during the third phase.

"Then we'll be able to say, 'Hey, we're permanently here and we're not giving it up,'" said NASA's moon base program executive Carlos Garcia-Galan.

Garcia-Galan envisions a moon base sprawling over hundreds of square miles, with a perimeter marked by drones, dubbed MoonFall, stationed at the corners.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said these territory markers are meant to be respectful of other countries' spacecraft and equipment that might be nearby. He expects reciprocity in the matter.

The goal of the moon base is to encourage a lunar economy while conducting scientific research and laying the foundation for a Mars expedition, Isaacman stressed.

"For those waiting patiently, the grand return is close at hand and we will not slow down," Isaacman said. "We are really just getting started."

ICE detainees are dying by suicide at an 'alarming' rate, an AP investigation finds

By RYAN J. FOLEY, MICHAEL BIESECKER AND MORGAN LEE Associated Press

Brayan Rayo Garzon was distraught. Detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, he was on his fourth day of isolation in a Missouri jail as he battled the fevers and chills of COVID-19.

His request for mental health treatment had been put off, records show, and staff had forbidden Rayo from making his nightly call to his mother as a precaution intended to prevent the spread of illness.

He pleaded with his jailers in handwritten notes to arrange a conversation with her. "I feel in my heart that she's very worried about me," he wrote in Spanish.

A guard collected the note and walked away. Within an hour, jail records show, he was found unconscious in his cell. An autopsy determined he killed himself.

Rayo's April 2025 death was the first suicide in a spike among ICE detainees that has alarmed public health officials and jail experts. They said the unprecedented number of suicide deaths is an indication

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that authorities are failing to properly oversee the detention of tens of thousands of immigrants swept up in the Trump administration's aggressive deportation strategy.

An Associated Press investigation found that at least 10 detainees, all men, have died by suicide since President Donald Trump took office in January 2025, a pace that far exceeds the growth in the detainee population, according to a review of ICE data, autopsy reports, coroner's rulings, and police records. Since October, seven deaths have been classified as suicides, a number that is already the most for any fiscal year in the agency's history. ICE has usually recorded one or no such deaths annually.

"Something is going profoundly wrong from any kind of public health or mental health perspective," said Dr. Sanjay Basu, a University of California-San Francisco epidemiologist who cowrote a study documenting the increase in mortality and suicide rates among ICE detainees. "This is one of those alarming, sudden increases."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

Nine of the deaths were of Hispanic men who had arrived in the U.S. from four countries, the AP found. One man was a Chinese citizen. Their average age was 32. While Trump has characterized those facing deportation as the "worst of the worst," seven of the 10 had no record of violent crimes in the U.S.

The suicides account for nearly a fifth of the 51 deaths in ICE custody since January 2025. The majority of those deaths were from natural causes and experts say many of them would have been preventable with timely medical care.

Department of Homeland Security acting assistant secretary Lauren Bies said suicide deaths in ICE custody remain "extremely rare."

Bies said detention staff follow protocols to protect detainees who show signs of self-harming and that ICE requires annual suicide prevention training. She said detainees receive comprehensive healthcare, including mental health services.

Investigation finds violations of ICE detention standards

The reasons behind any suicide are complex, and each death often has multiple contributing factors, according to experts. ICE detainees report intense stress after being detained, fear of being returned to countries where their safety may be jeopardized, and frustration and loneliness over the inability to communicate due to language barriers.

Detainees can also feel helplessness because of the complexity surrounding immigration law. Unlike those in the criminal justice system, most detainees do not have lawyers and their detention on immigration violations is not meant to be punitive.

ICE becomes responsible for their well-being when they enter detention, and experts say well-run lock-ups should have few, if any, suicides. That's because staff can take steps to mitigate the chances that detainees harm themselves by identifying those at risk, getting them care and monitoring them closely, the experts said.

AP's investigation found that ICE detention centers have repeatedly fallen short in ways that violate ICE's own standards.

An examination of the 10 suicide deaths found the men died across ICE's detention network, including at centers long run by private contractors and county jails who recently became ICE partners. The AP found that staff in the facilities ignored signs of distress, delayed mental health treatment and failed to monitor detainees who were already deemed at risk. They also permitted detainees to have access to materials that could be used for self-harm, according to AP's review of ICE inspection reports and death records.

In some cases, they jailed distressed detainees in isolation, which can exacerbate feelings of humiliation and helplessness, according to experts.

ICE has repeatedly asserted that it screens detainees within 12 hours of arrival for medical, dental and mental health conditions.

At least three of the nine facilities where ICE detainees died by suicide have struggled to meet that

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standard, according to ICE inspection reports and jail records.

Dr. Homer Venters, former chief medical officer of New York City jails who previously consulted with ICE on preventing detainee deaths, called the rise in suicides terrifying.

The increase "reflects failures in how the system's being operated, and particularly failures in how the first stages of coming into detention are happening so that people aren't being assessed adequately," Venters said. "And then if that receiving screening picks up red flags, they're not acted on in a way that reduces the risk of them having preventable death."

From border crossing to detention

Among those who took their own lives was a 19-year-old from Mexico who had been detained following a misdemeanor traffic stop while riding his scooter.

Another was a 36-year-old restaurant worker who lost contact with his relatives in Nicaragua after ICE detained him in Minnesota and sent him to a crowded camp in Texas. A third was a 45-year-old who had repeatedly crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally and had a long criminal record.

Rayo, who took his own life after pleading to talk to his mother, was a veteran of the Colombian military who had worked as a street vendor in his home country. A week after he turned 26 in 2023, his family crossed the U.S. border in California. He was detained for three months before being permitted to settle with family in St. Louis, records and interviews show.

His mother, Adriana Garzon, said Rayo caught on quickly to life in the U.S., making friends easily and working as a housepainter and food delivery driver. He wanted to save money to hire a lawyer to help him stay in the country after a judge in 2024 ordered that he be sent back to Colombia, she said.

He was arrested in March 2025 by St. Louis police after being caught using a stolen credit card, which he had obtained from a friend, at a Vape shop, court records show. ICE then took him into custody. An ICE record obtained by AP classified Rayo as a laborer who was a low risk to public safety.

ICE placed Rayo in the Phelps County jail in Rolla, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) from St. Louis.

Suicides reveal shortcomings across ICE's detention network

The deaths have revealed holes in treatment and oversight across ICE's system, where the detained population has spiked by 50% to 60,000 during Trump's second term.

Five died in centers run by longtime ICE detention partners, CoreCivic and the GEO Group. A sixth died at a camp operated by an inexperienced contractor that ICE has since replaced. Three died in jails run by sheriffs, and one at a federal prison.

"We are deeply saddened by and take very seriously the passing of any individual in our care," CoreCivic spokesperson Brian Todd said.

GEO Group spokesperson Christopher Ferreira said the company trains staff on suicide prevention and seeks "to maintain a safe and secure environment in compliance with the standards and requirements set by the federal government." Officials at the three jails either declined comment or didn't return messages.

Leo Cruz Silva, a 34-year-old who had repeatedly illegally entered the country from Mexico, suffered an acute mental health crisis following his detention after an arrest for public intoxication last fall in a St. Louis suburb, records show.

For two nights in Missouri's Ste. Genevieve County Jail, Cruz screamed, hid under his bed and reported hallucinations, according to an ICE report on his death. Yet he did not get help quickly.

A nurse ordered antipsychotic medications and planned to get him treatment the next week, the ICE report said.

On the third day, he was found dead in his cell.

Chaofeng Ge arrived in ICE custody last summer at a Pennsylvania facility run by the GEO Group in mental distress, having pleaded guilty to a minor gift card fraud and attempted suicide in state custody, said David Rankin, an attorney representing Ge's family.

In five days at the facility, he did not get mental health treatment and was unable to communicate because no one spoke Mandarin, Rankin said. Ultimately, Ge went unmonitored before he was found hanged in a shower stall.

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"It's clear that ICE has taken very few steps to ensure the safety of these people," Rankin said. "They appear to want to make this process as cruel and inhuman as possible. It's completely unacceptable."

At Camp East Montana in El Paso, Texas, 36-year-old Victor Diaz died by suicide in a medical holding room in January, according to an ICE report. He had been moved into isolation after reporting harassment by fellow detainees, the report said.

Days earlier at the same facility, Geraldo Lunas Campos died of asphyxia after ICE said guards restrained him following a suicide attempt. His death was ruled a homicide by a medical examiner, and Trump administration officials said the FBI was investigating its circumstances.

ICE inspectors visited the facility in February, documenting 49 violations of detention standards at what was then ICE's largest detention facility, according to their report.

The report found that staff did not record "required checks to prevent significant self-harm and suicide" while inspectors found tools and equipment unsecured and unaccounted for throughout the facility that could be used for harm. Calls to 911 show several other detainees had attempted suicide there.

At the time of the deaths and inspections, Acquisition Logistics was the contractor running the facility. ICE has since replaced Acquisition Logistics with another contractor. Acquisition Logistics did not return messages seeking comment.

Detainee spent final days sick and isolated

The Phelps County Jail had started taking ICE detainees a month before Rayo's arrival. Sheriff Michael Kirn, a Republican in a county where voters overwhelmingly supported Trump's reelection, told commissioners his department's budget was hurting and partnering with ICE could generate millions in revenue.

Records show Rayo's trouble started immediately. It took the jail 35 hours to conduct the initial medical screening that ICE promises within 12 hours, according to jail records obtained by the AP under the open records law.

Rayo exhibited labored breathing and told a nurse he was anxious and wanted mental health treatment.

A nurse who didn't speak Spanish used a "handheld translator" to assess Rayo, concluding he denied thoughts of suicide and depression, according to the documents compiled by the Missouri State Highway Patrol during an investigation into Rayo's death.

She recommended him for the general population, listing his physical and mental condition as stable, records show. And she referred him for a routine mental health appointment.

Two days later, he reported head pain and body aches. Staff learned he was positive for exposure to tuberculosis bacteria. He was sent to a hospital, where he was diagnosed with COVID-19. He was returned to jail the following day.

The mental health appointment was scheduled but canceled due to "mental health clinic time and staff," a jail record shows. Two days later, they again canceled his appointment, this time citing his coronavirus infection.

The delays violated an ICE standard requiring mental health treatment within a week of a referral.

Bies, the DHS spokesperson, said Rayo received "high-quality medical care during his time in ICE custody."

To ease his anxiety, Rayo called his mother before bed to share a Catholic blessing. "I gave him strength," said Garzon, whose first name Adriana was tattooed on her son's arm.

As Rayo grew sicker with nausea, chills and aches, staff moved him into a cinderblock isolation cell with a surveillance camera overhead for closer monitoring and to prevent the spread of disease. He was not allowed to call his mother.

On his fourth day of isolation, Rayo passed two notes under his door, begging guards to let him talk to his mom. In one, which was reviewed by AP, he appealed to the guard's humanity. "I know you have family, and you know that they worry about us," he wrote in Spanish. "God bless you."

The English-speaking guard used a colleague's phone to translate the notes, and wrote in a report that he planned to follow up.

Within an hour, guards found Rayo unconscious on his bed with a sheet around his neck.

Emergency responders tried to revive him, transporting him to a hospital. That's when an official called

Rayo's mother — to let her know her son was in very bad shape and would be flown to a St. Louis medical center. At the hospital, a doctor gave her the devastating news: Her son was dead.

Chemical tank implosion in Washington state kills 1 and leaves 9 missing

By CLAIRE RUSH and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

LONGVIEW, Wash. (AP) — A massive chemical tank holding nearly a million gallons of a highly corrosive liquid imploded and collapsed Tuesday at a Washington paper mill, killing at least one worker and leaving nine others unaccounted for with no hope for rescue, authorities said.

Another nine people were injured, some severely, in the spill at Nippon Dynawave Packaging Co. in Longview. The cause remained unclear.

"At the moment we are not aware of any rescues that are yet to be made," Cowlitz Fire and Rescue Chief Scott Goldstein said during a Tuesday evening news conference in which officials repeatedly referred to the situation as a recovery effort.

That effort would not resume until Wednesday morning, when emergency responders planned to work on stabilizing the collapsed tank, which still had about 90,000 gallons (more than 340,000 liters) of a chemical brew known as "white liquor" inside, and then search for the missing, Goldstein said.

The severity of the injuries ranged from minor to critical, with some suffering burns or inhalation injuries, authorities said. Among those injured was a responding firefighter.

Officials said they would only work during daylight hours because there was a risk of the tank leaking more caustic liquid and potentially collapsing.

"We don't know until we know, hopefully tomorrow, how we can stabilize the tank. Do we remove the product first? Do we stabilize the tank first or the vice versa?" Goldstein said.

Authorities said there was no threat to the public.

Community waits for more information

At a community vigil Tuesday night, dozens gathered at a local park to pray, light candles and embrace teary-eyed loved ones.

Crystal Moldenhauer, a Longview resident who served on the school board, said she has friends who work at the plant and remained unaccounted for. She described the stress of the day as people called and texted each other trying to figure out what happened.

"We're all still waiting for answers," she said. "There's families that have been torn apart, and we don't know why."

Two upset parents who said their two sons worked at the plant interjected at the end of the news conference, saying they hadn't been contacted. While officials including Gov. Bob Ferguson, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and U.S. Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez addressed those gathered, no one from the company spoke at the news conference.

Some people waited at the company's visitor entrance earlier Tuesday, seeking information about loved ones. They declined to comment to an Associated Press reporter. At a nearby union hall that was serving as a family assistance center, three women shared a tearful embrace before heading inside. Others coming and going were also in tears.

Facility is central to the community

The Nippon Dynawave Packaging Co. facility is a pulp and paper mill and liquid packaging plant along the Columbia River in Longview, a city of about 38,000 that has had a relationship with the paper and lumber industries since its founding by a Kansas City timber baron in the 1920s.

The facility, which employs about 1,000 people and dates to 1953, makes material for tissues, printing paper, cups, plates, cartons and other goods. It is located in an industrial zone shared by other timber, paper and chemical businesses, and it remains central to the community.

"The people who are responders here have friends and relatives that work on site," Cowlitz Fire and

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Rescue Chief Scott Goldstein noted. "It is something that is impactful, and we have support networks to support the workers as well as the emergency responders."

Officials initially reported that the tank had a capacity of 80,000 gallons (303,000 liters), but later revised that number to say it was holding about 900,000 gallons (3.4 million liters) of the "white liquor." That's nearly enough to fill a typical Olympic-sized swimming pool one and a half times. The liquid, which consists mainly of sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide, is used with heat to break down wood to make kraft paper, a durable material used in packaging, shopping bags and other products.

Cause is not yet known

It was too early to determine the cause of the implosion, Goldstein said.

Following the tank's rupture, the white liquor spilled into a drainage ditch, said Brittny Goodsell, a state Ecology Department spokesperson. The department sent a team to evaluate the impacts, Goodsell said.

"I know there's a lot of questions about how all of this happened and I want to assure you that we will all continue to pressure to get answers to those questions," Murray said during the Tuesday evening news conference. "This community deserves that."

The implosion came as thousands of residents of Southern California remained evacuated Tuesday due to a damaged chemical tank at an aerospace plant. All evacuation orders were lifted Tuesday night.

Just over 40 people died between January 2021 and mid-October 2023 as a result of hazardous chemical incidents, according to a paper released by a network of environmental justice organizations in late 2023.

Previous health and safety violations

Safety complaints were filed against Nippon Dynawave on March 4 and May 6. The state's labor and industries department said on X that both are unrelated to the current situation and remain open. The former was an anonymous complaint about a valve on an aqua ammonia clarifier tank, according to the department, which noted that "it was not the tank that imploded." The other was opened about a sinkhole created by a drain that failed, according to the department.

Nippon Dynawave, a subsidiary of Japan-based Nippon Paper Group, has been fined a total of \$3,400 for three separate health and safety violations found by Washington Department of Labor and Industries inspectors since the start of 2021, according to the department's online database.

In one inspection, the company was cited because face coverings were not worn by every employee when required. In another, the inspector determined that an employee was exposed to the risk of falling while working on a platform more than 4 feet (1.2 meters) off the ground.

In the third incident, the department determined that equipment involved in a work-related accident — an amputated finger — was moved from its original position before the state's investigation into the accident was complete.

For one Ukrainian war amputee, rebuilding is painful after a Russian strike killed her husband

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KRYVYI RIH, Ukraine (AP) — After Iryna Nakonechna lost her left leg last year in a Russian missile attack that also killed her husband, the Ukrainian woman decided everything tied to her former self had to go.

She cut off her dark wavy hair and removed furniture, clothes, trinkets and photographs from her home. Just one reminder of her previous life remained: a portrait of herself and her husband, Serhii Nakonechnyi.

Shedding her old identity was necessary, she said, to endure the painful reinvention required to build a life with a prosthetic.

Today, Nakonechna is quick-witted and effervescent, her laughter loud and sudden. She wears a pixie haircut and bold red cat-eye glasses, and knits small toy capybaras — an animal that has become an unofficial symbol among amputees in Ukraine. But beneath the sparkle in her eyes lies a grief woven into the painful process of becoming someone new. It's an often unspoken reality beneath the narratives of resilience surrounding the tens of thousands of people in Ukraine who have lost limbs in the war that began more than four years ago when Russia launched a full-scale invasion.

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"The hardest thing was accepting myself with these injuries, wounds that are not only physical," she said. "Coming to terms with how much my life has changed has been very difficult."

The exact number of war amputees in Ukraine is unknown, but it continues to rise as landmines, artillery, and missile and drone strikes inflict catastrophic injuries on soldiers and civilians. The increase has fueled an expansion of rehabilitation and prosthetics services, while also reshaping Ukrainian society. Prosthetic limbs have become increasingly visible and powerful symbols of survival and defiance.

Nakonechna, 50, still walks with a limp and uses a cane as she learns to trust the prosthetic that reaches her upper thigh. The airstrike also left her with limited mobility in her arms, making it difficult to lift heavy objects.

Walking with confidence

The next step in Nakonechna's rehabilitation is learning to walk without a cane, her physical therapist, Anastasiia Stetsenko, said.

She must not only build her strength, but also her confidence. She must trust herself through movements most people take for granted: climbing stairs, squatting to pick something up, navigating uneven streets, or chasing after her 2-year-old grandson at the playground.

Nakonechna's weekly hourlong sessions with Stetsenko begin with removing her prosthetic and resting it against the wall.

Then, Stetsenko has Nakonechna lift a plastic bar while seated, timing the movement to her breathing.

"You are a demon," Nakonechna says to Stetsenko, when the exercises become taxing.

Later, Stetsenko has Nakonechna lie back and rotate her amputated limb in slow circles, testing the limits of her range of motion.

"This feels like an extreme sport," Nakonechna jokes.

Finally, Stetsenko suggests she squat while gripping a ballet barre, one of the hardest movements for her to relearn.

"I will respond as my grandson would," Nakonechna says. "Just no."

The two women break into peals of laughter, sounding more like old friends than therapist and patient.

The day of the attack

The attack happened on March 5, 2025. After dinner, Nakonechna and her husband took advantage of unseasonably warm spring weather with an evening stroll.

They were near the entrance of hotel in central Kryvyi Rih when a Russian missile tore through the building, hurling them in opposite directions.

Her ears rang as her husband, now several meters away, screamed.

She pushed herself upright and felt her left shoulder crunch. The bones were broken. She reached for her left leg but couldn't feel it.

The couple ended up at different hospitals. Her husband died the next day.

"I never got to say goodbye," Nakonechna said. "I wasn't even at the funeral."

Over the next two months, the days dissolved into a blur as Nakonechna underwent two surgeries a week.

By May of that year, she could finally sit up again.

She felt relieved, she said, but it was only the beginning.

A new life

The apartment Nakonechna once shared with her husband is now almost unrecognizable.

"I had to get rid of everything from the past," she said. "And focus on living my life, even if it was half the life I had before."

Nakonechna invited her 77-year-old mother, who has dementia, to move in with her. At lunch, her mother carefully sets a pot of borscht on the table. Nakonechna said such tasks are no longer easy for her.

She laments that she still cannot lift her grandson, Tymofii. One day, the boy placed a sticker of a cartoon capybara wearing a prosthetic leg onto her own prosthetic. She left it there.

A meticulous craftswoman, she later began knitting toy capybaras through Superhumans, a modern war-trauma center specializing in prosthetics and rehabilitation. During the war, veterans started putting

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the toys and stickers of the fuzzy, playful animals on their limbs to put strangers at ease. The capybara has since come to symbolize resilience and the determination to reclaim joy after devastation.

Nakonechna's toys quickly became popular, and she spends hours knitting them. Her favorite part is assembling the pieces at the end, when the toy becomes whole.

"When I count the stitches, I think only about the stitches, not about the life that could have been and unfortunately is not," Nakonechna said.

Recently, she marked a personal victory: For the first time since her injury, she wore shorts.

The small act marked a powerful shift.

"I accepted myself as I am," she said.

Billionsaire Tom Steyer's ad spending breaks records in California governor's race

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Win or lose, billionsaire Democrat Tom Steyer will leave a mark in the history books in his bid to become California's next governor — he's running the most expensive political advertising campaign in the country this year.

Steyer — a former hedge fund manager turned liberal activist — has spent or booked more than \$195 million in ads for broadcast TV, cable and radio with the tally still growing, according to data compiled by advertising tracker AdImpact.

His torrent of ads have opened the one-time presidential candidate to criticism that he is trying to buy the governor's chair, and his ad total represents more than 20 times the amount spent by his nearest rival, fellow Democrat Xavier Becerra, as the two duel for a spot in the November election.

Nationally, no one is close.

In Georgia, Republican health care executive Rick Jackson has spent about \$83 million on advertising in his primary race for governor, which is headed for a June runoff, ranking him second. The third place spot is held by his Republican rival, Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, who has President Donald Trump's endorsement and has spent nearly \$31 million on ads, according to AdImpact.

Following Jones was Democratic U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois, who spent over \$28 million on advertising in a failed bid for U.S. Senate.

Trying to 'buy the governor's office?'

Katie Porter, a former U.S. House member who is among seven established Democrats in the California race, has repeatedly criticized Steyer for dipping into his personal fortune to keep ads in front of voters with scant competition from rivals.

"She isn't spending hundreds of millions of dollars of personal wealth trying to buy the governor's office," her campaign wrote in an email to supporters.

In raw numbers, Steyer ad blitz has eclipsed the 2010 record set by Republican Meg Whitman, who spent \$178.5 million in total on a losing bid for governor, much of it her own money. At the time, it was the costliest campaign for statewide office in the nation's history. When adjusted for inflation, however, Whitman still holds the state record, but that represented spending for the full election, not just the primary.

A crowded field with no clear leader

Steyer's record-level output has lifted him into contention in the crowded race but he's not breaking away from the field. He's among a leading group of several candidates — including Becerra and Republican Steve Hilton — as the campaign heads toward a June 2 primary. Mail voting started earlier this month.

Still, Steyer's cash advantage is giving him a publicity edge as the contest enters its crucial final days. He's kept up a steady flow of advertising and online posts questioning Becerra's credentials and record, with Becerra, a former state attorney general and Biden administration health secretary, lacking the funds to reply in kind.

One Becerra ad sought to connect with voters who might be getting bleary-eyed from the cascade of Steyer advertising. It used tranquil scenes of Joshua trees, waves curling on a beach and soaring redwoods

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with a gentle prod, "You can stop the endless Tom Steyer ads. Vote Xavier Becerra."

Steyer's financial edge has allowed him to stretch the boundaries of his campaign far beyond traditional TV and radio ads, with steady posts on online platforms like YouTube and Instagram. The New York Times reported that his campaign paid a progressive Texas influencer \$100,000 to help Steyer win the election. The Sacramento Bee reported that Becerra, too, had hired an influencer.

Many voters have been slow to vote in a race without a star candidate and no clear leader. More than 50 names will be on the ballot. California uses a "top two" primary system that puts all candidates on one ballot, with only the top two vote-getters advancing to November, regardless of party.

"In a race this close, it all matters," said Democratic consultant Andrew Acosta.

Money doesn't always make the difference

History shows that money doesn't always translate into votes.

Billionaire developer Rick Caruso spent over \$100 million in 2022 in his bid to become Los Angeles mayor, much of it his own money, but he was handily defeated by Mayor Karen Bass, who spent a fraction of Caruso's total. Billionaire former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg spent more than \$1 billion of his own money on his 2020 presidential bid before dropping out. And Steyer's money was unable to lift him into contention in the 2020 presidential contest, when he dropped out early in the year after a poor finish in the South Carolina primary.

Democratic San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan's campaign for governor was supported by independent committees bankrolled with millions of dollars from tech leaders and venture capitalists, yet he failed to gain traction in the race.

Steyer has never held elected office.

In a 2019 interview with The Associated Press, Steyer was asked what he would say to people who think he's trying to buy the presidency.

"I don't think that's possible," Steyer said at the time, before adding, "I'm never going to apologize for succeeding in business. That's America, right?"

The contest is unfolding as California struggles with a long-running homeless crisis, wildfire insurance shortages, projected budget shortfalls and housing costs that are out of reach for many working-class families. Voters, meanwhile, are saddled with growing everyday bills for groceries, utilities and gas.

The AdImpact data does not include ads on some popular streaming services like Hulu and YouTube or mail advertising.

Cornyn went to great lengths to avoid Trump's wrath. The Texas senator lost his seat anyway

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

PLANO, Texas (AP) — As it turned out, it would never be enough.

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn tried for more than a year to show Donald Trump and Texas Republicans that he and the president were on the same team.

Cornyn posted a photo of himself reading Trump's "The Art of the Deal." He proposed legislation to rename a stretch of interstate in Trump's honor. Perhaps most glaringly, the Senate institutionalist who long supported the filibuster reversed his position in a failed effort to advance voting restrictions that are a priority for the president.

None of it worked. On Tuesday, Cornyn became the latest in a line of Republicans who lost their primaries after falling out of favor with a president with little tolerance for dissent and a seemingly insatiable appetite for retribution. The four-term senator lost by double digits to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who Trump endorsed last week as "a true MAGA Warrior."

Cornyn, on the other hand, "was VERY disloyal to me," Trump wrote on social media.

Trump's intervention in the Texas runoff came after weeks of successfully backing primary challengers in Indiana, Louisiana and Kentucky as revenge against incumbents who broke with his agenda.

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Cornyn's attempt to avoid the same fate made even some of his supporters wince.

"You look at the positions he took to please the president and the groveling and whatever," said former Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona, a Republican and Trump critic who didn't seek reelection during the president's first midterm in 2018. "It was rather painful to watch."

Cornyn started early with ad touting pro-Trump voting record

Cornyn's loss wasn't for a lack of political gymnastics and astronomical campaign spending.

His campaign began running an advertisement last summer — part of an astounding nearly-\$100-million air war by the senator and allied groups — with Cornyn looking into the camera and saying, "I voted with President Trump 99% of the time."

On Cornyn's campaign homepage, Trump and Cornyn stand side-by-side with thumbs pointed upward in an image aimed at projecting solidarity. Deeper in the website, the category titled "The Trump-Cornyn Record" notes the senator's role securing votes for Trump's signature 2017 tax cut bill.

Cornyn has also been championing provisions in Trump's signature tax-and-spending legislation to finance work on the U.S.-Mexico border wall.

The senator had dismissed the project as "naive" during Trump's 2016 campaign. But in January, he stood along a section of completed wall in Texas' Rio Grande Valley touting the measure's \$11 billion for Texas contractors' work at "the direction of the president of the United States, to whom I am very grateful."

Cornyn's 2023 dismissal of Trump's return glares in background

Cornyn's praise for his party's leader and president were not unusual, but they clash with a statement Cornyn made in May 2023, when Trump was mounting his presidential comeback campaign.

"Trump's time has passed him by," he told reporters. "I don't think President Trump understands that when you run in a general election, you have to appeal to voters beyond your base."

Trump would go on to easily win the nomination and carry every battleground state in the general election.

Cornyn would hew closely to the president for the first 16 months of his second administration, hoping at the outside chance of his endorsement or to keeping him from weighing in at all.

But Trump did not forget the past slights.

"John Cornyn is a good man, and I worked well with him, but he was not supportive of me when times were tough," he wrote on social media while endorsing Paxton.

Smaller gestures, and one big one

Cornyn has playfully worked to promote Trump fandom, last year posting a picture on social media of himself thoughtfully peering into the pages of Trump's 1987 memoir and business advice book, "The Art of the Deal."

In a more obvious gesture, he proposed designating a section of a U.S. highway from the Texas Gulf Coast to Montana as "Interstate 47," to honor a 47th president with a well-documented love of naming things after himself. In a news release about the proposal, filed just over two weeks before Tuesday's runoff, Cornyn said it would be known as the "Trump Interstate."

The more tectonic shift occurred in March, after Trump had teased a possible endorsement of either Cornyn or Paxton in the runoff.

Paxton swiftly said he would consider dropping his candidacy if the Republican-controlled Senate lifted the filibuster and passed the SAVE America Act, a series of voting restrictions that Trump has described as an essential part of his agenda.

The following week, Cornyn wrote an op-ed in the New York Post — Trump's favorite hometown newspaper — backing away from his previous support of the filibuster. He vowed to "support whatever changes to Senate rules that may prove necessary" to get the bill "through the Senate and on the president's desk for his signature."

Flake watched with unease.

"I know John and his long-held positions on the filibuster and the Senate's institutions," he said. "No office is worth that."

Paxton dominates Cornyn in Texas US Senate runoff, the latest sign of Trump's hold on GOP

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

PLANO, Texas (AP) — Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton won the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate on Tuesday, easily defeating four-term Sen. John Cornyn in the latest contest where President Donald Trump sought to oust an incumbent he saw as insufficiently loyal.

Trump endorsed Paxton last week, calling him a “true MAGA warrior.” Paxton’s victory in Tuesday’s runoff makes Cornyn — who was first elected to the Senate in 2002 — the first Republican senator from Texas to lose the party’s nomination for reelection.

Cheers rang through the ballroom at Paxton’s election night party when the race was called, and he took the stage to supporters chanting his name. He quickly gave credit to Trump.

“When everyone in Washington told him to abandon me and abandon the people of Texas, he didn’t listen,” Paxton said. “President Trump is the leader of our party, and his endorsement is the most powerful force in politics.”

Cornyn’s loss followed primaries this month where Trump successfully backed challengers to Republican lawmakers who had displeased him in Louisiana, Kentucky and Indiana, a sign of his enduring influence among primary voters.

The candidates that Trump endorsed in those states are expected to easily win against Democratic opponents. However, the president’s decision to boost Paxton, who won Tuesday with a sliver of the Republican base who shrugged off his past scandals, may be a bigger gamble in the general election.

Democrats are hopeful that their nominee, state Rep. James Talarico, has a rare opportunity to win a statewide race in Texas — and help the party retake control of the Senate — with Paxton as his opponent.

Tuesday’s runoffs also decided Democratic U.S. House nominees for districts in Dallas and Houston that overwhelmingly support Democrats, and a San Antonio-area seat the party wants to flip.

‘I will be the Democrats’ No. 1 target’

In Austin on Tuesday night, Cornyn gave a short concession speech tinged with emotion to a room of only reporters.

“Tonight we’ve come up short,” Cornyn said, adding that he’d support Paxton in the general election. “I’ve always supported the Republican ticket, and I intend to do so again.”

Cornyn said in 2023 as Trump was running to return to the White House that his time “has passed him by,” a statement that came back to bite him. He also was an early critic of Trump’s plan for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico — a project he now supports.

Cornyn had the backing of Senate GOP leaders who said he would be the stronger general election candidate against Talarico, which was also the senator’s argument to voters before Tuesday.

That’s not lost on Paxton, who said in his speech that “without a shadow of a doubt, I will be the Democrats’ No. 1 target in November.”

Talarico’s campaign hit back Tuesday night on the social platform X, highlighting what they — and some Republicans — see as Paxton’s weakness, including an FBI investigation and impeachment for corruption in which he was later acquitted.

The primary was long and costly

Cornyn led Paxton in the March 3 primary but failed to win a majority. That was after Cornyn and his supporters waged a monthslong advertising campaign, mostly attacking Paxton over ethical and personal questions.

The two-term attorney general was acquitted on corruption charges in a 2023 impeachment trial, where allegations of extramarital affairs surfaced. Paxton’s wife filed for divorce last year, citing “biblical grounds.”

It gave Cornyn fodder for an ad campaign that, along with allied groups, spent roughly \$109 million between the primary and runoff elections.

Immediately after the primary, Trump promised to endorse but didn’t act until after early voting began

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last week.

"Ken Paxton has gone through a lot, in many cases, very unfairly, but he is a fighter, and knows how to win," Trump wrote in a social media post endorsing him.

Retired Dallas-area resident David Jacobson, 70, said Trump's endorsement was a factor in his decision to back Paxton on Tuesday. While Cornyn has for the most part been a strong Trump supporter, Jacobson generally thinks most politicians have remained in office too long.

"Maybe it's time for a change," he said after voting.

Linda Williams said she voted for Cornyn, calling him "the lesser of two evils." She thought Cornyn had a better chance to beat Talarico this fall.

"Because Paxton is a crook," Williams said after voting in Plano, outside Dallas.

Trump snubbed Cornyn amid retribution campaign

Trump, in his endorsement, poked at Cornyn, saying he "was not supportive of me when times were tough" and that "John was very late in backing me."

Cornyn said Tuesday on Fox News Radio's "The Brian Kilmeade Show" that the president's ire was misplaced. He said, "grifters" are "claiming that I am opposed to the president's agenda, and I think that's caused some confusion with the president himself. But I've been supportive."

Some GOP strategists have argued that a Paxton nomination would cost millions of dollars more to promote in the fall, when money could be spent defending Republican seats in more competitive states. Democrats need to gain a net of four seats to take the majority. Cornyn had the support of Senate GOP leaders.

Democrats choose US House nominees

Newly elected Rep. Christian Menefee defeated veteran Rep. Al Green in Texas' 18th District, dispatching a longtime House incumbent who was one of Trump's most outspoken critics. The Republican-led Texas Legislature redrew the district when it approved a new House map last year. The new map led to a runoff between incumbents and marks the end of a dizzying series of elections in the Houston area.

Former Rep. Colin Allred beat U.S. Rep. Julie Johnson in the Dallas-area 33rd District's Democratic primary runoff. Johnson was elected to the seat in 2024, the year Allred lost his U.S. Senate challenge to Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. Allred was running for Senate again this cycle but dropped his bid and instead sought a return to the House.

Near San Antonio, Johnny Garcia won the Democratic primary for Texas' 35th District against against Maureen Galindo, a candidate who has expressed antisemitic views. While Texas lawmakers redrew the district to help Republicans, Democrats view it as within reach and didn't want Galindo's past comments to impede them.

Garcia will face Republican Carlos De La Cruz, who defeated John Lujan in the GOP primary.

Southern California officials lift all evacuation orders for residents near damaged chemical tank

By AMY TAXIN, CHRISTOPHER WEBER and MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. (AP) — Southern California officials lifted the final evacuation orders Tuesday night for residents who live near a damaged chemical tank, allowing 16,000 people to return home.

The crisis that began Thursday had forced 50,000 people to evacuate in and around the Orange County city of Garden Grove. A crack that formed by chance on the tank relieved pressure and helped avert a catastrophic explosion, allowing most evacuees to return home over the Memorial Day weekend. Authorities announced they were lifting the final orders after the temperature on the tank remained stable for four hours without intervention from sprinklers.

"All residents will go home," Orange County Fire Authority Division Chief Craig Covey said during a meeting that grew raucous at times as residents questioned why the chemical was allowed in a densely populated area and urged city officials to hold the company that operates the tank accountable.

The tank contains methyl methacrylate, which is highly flammable. Health officials have assured resi-

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dents that no contamination or fumes were released, and that they will keep monitoring the air for several months and checking the sewer and storm drains. Exposure to the chemical can cause serious respiratory problems, neurological issues and irritation to the skin, eyes and throat, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

The tank at GKN Aerospace Transparency Systems, which makes cockpit windows, canopies and windshields, contains 6,000 to 7,000 gallons (22,700 to 26,500 liters) of the chemical.

Separately, an implosion of a chemical tank Tuesday at a pulp and paper mill in Washington state killed one worker and left nine others accounted for, with authorities saying they were working on recovery efforts. Nine others were injured.

Residents call for accountability

Angry residents spoke at the city council meeting after the crisis interrupted Memorial Day plans, graduation ceremonies and daily life in central Orange County, which is made up of a cluster of cities including Garden Grove.

Karen Nguyen, a 29-year-old Garden Grove resident, said she will be able to go home now that the evacuation order is being lifted but is concerned about what the chemical might do to her three cats, which already have health issues. She told the city council she wants stricter regulations to ensure nothing like this happens again, and she doesn't want to see these plants in her community.

"They're not welcome in our neighborhood," she said.

Bobbi-Lee Smart said she was evacuated from her home in nearby Anaheim but many of her neighbors were too poor to get out. She said this never should have happened as the company had a record of violations. She demanded the city take action.

"Please shut them down, please take care of our residents," she said.

Mayor Stephanie Klopfenstein pledged to hold the company accountable.

In a statement earlier Tuesday, GKN said it was working closely with authorities.

"We apologize for the ongoing disruption this incident is causing, and our priority remains the safety of our neighbors and our community," the statement said.

GKN agreed to pay state regulators more than \$900,000 in 2025 to settle violations involving recordkeeping, permitting issues and nitrogen oxide emissions, according to a report on the South Coast Air Quality Management District website.

Authorities scrambled to minimize risk

Crews at the California plant had worked to ensure two nearby tanks were neutralized and would not be affected by the compromised tank, Orange County Fire Capt. Brian Yau said.

The tank overheated because a valve on the cooling system failed that kept it at 50 degrees, (10 degrees Celsius), Covey said.

Crews sprayed water on the tank until the interior temperature stabilized to 92 F (33.3 C), down from 100 F (37.7 C) over the weekend, the fire department said earlier Tuesday. A sprinkler system was used to douse the tank, and the company said its technical specialists and firefighters removed insulation from the tank to help cool it.

Officials will remain to continue monitoring, he said.

So far testing has found no contamination, officials said.

Orange County Health Director Regina Chinsio-Kwong tried to reassure people returning home over the holiday weekend, saying "you should feel comfortable going home even if you're across the street from that new zone line."

Isabel Mendez, 34, said she broke out in a rash on her face and had tingling lips and a sore throat while she was getting ready to leave after an evacuation order was issued Thursday. Her symptoms disappeared a few hours later, she said. She was among the last people allowed back to her home, which is a mobile home close to the site of the leak.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District will monitor the air for several months and the EPA will be checking sewer and storm drains for spills, Orange County Supervisor Janet Nguyen said.

The California crisis is reminiscent of a 2014 chemical spill in Charleston, West Virginia when storage tanks failed. The disaster inspired a new state law requiring more inspections and registrations of aboveground storage tanks.

Southern Poverty Law Center seeks dismissal of 'vindictive' Justice Department indictment

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Justice Department indictment against the Southern Poverty Law Center is part of a "top-down" campaign of retribution against President Donald Trump's perceived political enemies and constitutes a vindictive prosecution that must be dismissed, lawyers for the nonprofit argued Tuesday in urging a judge to toss the case out.

The Alabama-based nonprofit was indicted in April on fraud and money laundering charges that accuse it of misleading donors by paying informants inside white supremacist and other extremist organizations to obtain inside information about their activities.

Lawyers for the SPLC have already argued that law enforcement agencies have long known that the nonprofit paid informants to report on the movements of hate groups. They have also said acting Attorney General Todd Blanche made a false statement at a news conference when he said the organization had not shared with law enforcement information it had learned from informants. Blanche later appeared to walk back that claim in a television interview, saying it was true that the SPLC had "selectively" shared information with law enforcement over the years.

The attorneys for the center expanded on those arguments Tuesday, saying in a legal brief seeking to dismiss the case that the prosecution was the "culmination of a top-down, retributive campaign" in which Trump pushed the Justice Department "to go after those individuals and groups he deemed his political enemies, including the SPLC."

Defense says indictment fits broader retaliation campaign

The brief was filed against the backdrop of other politically charged prosecutions that have raised concerns that the Justice Department is operating as a weapon to target Trump's opponents. It drew a parallel between the SPLC indictment and the human smuggling prosecution of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, which was dismissed Friday on similar vindictive prosecution grounds by a judge who called the case an "abuse of prosecuting power."

The SPLC has said its now-defunct program of paying informants to infiltrate hate groups was developed to glean key insights into their activities so that potential victims could be protected. An earlier federal investigation into the practice was closed without charges, but the brief paints the current Justice Department as pursuing the case with renewed — and rushed — vigor.

The department decided to pursue the indictment without having interviewed any current SPLC employees, and did not seek any documents from the group until after it had told defense lawyers that criminal charges were forthcoming, defense lawyers say.

During a meeting requested by defense lawyers who hoped to avert to indictment, Justice Department officials informed them that the decision had already been made to pursue charges, according to the brief.

"These procedural irregularities show that the charges against the SPLC were a foregone conclusion based on prosecutorial vindictiveness — driven by the White House and FBI leadership's retribution campaign — rather than the result of a good faith examination of the evidence," the document states. It says the indictment was "premised on conclusory accusations but devoid of provable facts or a proper statement of the law."

The motion also cites whistleblower accounts that accused top Justice Department officials of rushing forward with an indictment despite internal concerns about the merits of the case and the strength of the evidence.

"For weeks, we have been arguing against these false allegations levied against the SPLC — an orga-

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nization that for 55 years has stood as a beacon of hope fighting white supremacy and various forms of injustice to create a multiracial democracy where we can all live and thrive," Bryan Fair, the interim president and CEO of SPLC, said in a statement.

"The government can't prosecute the SPLC as payback for its protected speech — it violates basic constitutional rights," he said.

The administration has painted SPLC as partisan

Founded in 1971 as a civil rights organization, the SPLC over the decades has used litigation to fight white supremacist groups. It also tracks the activities and locations of domestic extremists. But its work has made it a popular target among Republicans who see it as overly leftist and partisan.

The center, for instance, received fresh attention last year after the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk because the SPLC had included a section on the group that Kirk founded and led, Turning Point USA, in a report titled "The Year in Hate and Extremism 2024."

FBI Director Kash Patel announced in October that the bureau would be severing its relationship with the SPLC, saying it had turned into a "partisan smear machine," and he accused it of defaming "mainstream Americans" with its "hate map" that documents alleged anti-government and hate groups inside the United States.

The defense motion says "animus" from senior levels of the administration helped shape the indictment.

It cites, among other comments, a statement from Trump himself deriding the SPLC as "a total scam run by the Democrats," as well as a news media interview in which Harmeet Dhillon, the Justice Department's top civil rights official, said the indictment was "personal" to her because she had "a lot of journalist friends ... and groups that I've represented who have been targeted by the Southern Poverty Law Center."

South Carolina Senate rejects Trump's call to redraw congressional map for midterm elections

By JEFFREY COLLINS, MEG KINNARD, KIM CHANDLER and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — President Donald Trump's push to reshape congressional districts ahead of the November elections suffered a double setback Tuesday, as South Carolina senators declined to do so and a federal court blocked a Republican-backed map in Alabama.

As early in-person voting began Tuesday in South Carolina's primaries, the state Senate rejected a Republican plan to cancel those congressional votes and instead schedule a new primary under revised districts designed to help the GOP oust a longtime Democrat.

Some senators said it was simply too late to make a change.

"South Carolina citizens are going to the polls today. And neither my conscience or common sense is going to let me stop an election that is already underway," Republican state Sen. Richard Cash said.

The political drama in South Carolina is part of a Republican strategy — propelled by Trump — to redraw voting districts to the GOP's advantage in an attempt to hold on to a slim House majority in the midterm elections. Republicans have moved quickly to try to leverage a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that weakened minority protections under the federal Voting Rights Act.

But in Alabama, a three-judge federal panel issued a preliminary injunction blocking the state from using a Republican-drawn congressional map that could help the GOP win an additional seat. The court said the plan "intentionally discriminated based on race" by including only one Black-majority district, and it ordered the continued use of a court-imposed map that includes two districts with a significant proportion of Black residents.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall, a Republican, vowed a quick appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court and predicted an eventual victory.

Republicans, who remain ahead in a national mid-decade redistricting battle, also notched some victories in lower courts on Tuesday.

A state judge in Florida declined to block new congressional districts passed by the Republican-led Legislature from being used in the midterm elections. Republicans stand to gain as many as four seats under

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the new map. The judge said voting rights groups that sued hadn't shown they were likely to succeed on their claim that the map was drawn with political intent in violation of Florida's Constitution. The groups said they were quickly appealing to a higher court, and vowed to keep pursuing the case all the way to the state Supreme Court, if necessary.

A federal court also declined to issue a temporary restraining order in a lawsuit contending that Tennessee's new U.S. House districts are racially discriminatory. The new Republican-drawn map carves up a majority-Black district in Memphis, giving Republicans an improved chance to win the state's only Democratic-held seat. The case is one of several brought against the map.

A redistricting battle that has spanned 10 months

Voting districts typically are redrawn after a census at the start of a decade. But Trump has urged Republican-led states to redistrict ahead of the November elections to try to rebuff political headwinds, which typically result in lost congressional seats for the president's party in midterms.

Since Trump first urged Texas to redraw its voting districts last summer, Republicans also have enacted new House districts in Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida and Tennessee. Republicans think they could gain as many as 14 seats from those efforts, and perhaps 15 if they eventually win the ability to use a different map in Alabama.

Meanwhile, Democrats think they could win five additional seats from new voter-approved districts in California, plus one more from a new court-imposed map in Utah. Democrats suffered a setback earlier this month in Virginia, where the state Supreme Court invalidated a voter-approved redistricting plan that could have helped Democrats win additional seats.

Redistricting discussions are ongoing in Louisiana following an April high court ruling that struck down a majority-Black congressional district as an illegal partisan gerrymander. The Louisiana House could vote later this week on a new map that could eliminate a seat held by Democratic U.S. Rep. Cleo Fields and improve Republicans' chances of winning six of the state's seven seats.

The Congressional Black Caucus on Tuesday called on major corporations, including those that previously expressed support for voting rights and racial justice, to oppose redistricting efforts by Republican-led states that seek to eliminate majority-Black U.S. House districts. The caucus last week called for Black athletes to boycott public universities in states that are gerrymandering congressional maps to eliminate districts held by Black lawmakers.

Clyburn decries White House role in redistricting

More than 55,000 ballots were cast Tuesday on South Carolina's first day of early voting for the June 9 primary after Democrats called for people against a proposed new map to turn out in force. In the 2022 midterms, about 125,000 early votes were cast in the entire two weeks.

Among the first to cast an early ballot in the small city of Orangeburg was U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, the Democrat whose district Republicans were trying to reshape in their quest for a clean sweep of South Carolina's congressional seats. A defiant Clyburn insisted he would run for reelection, regardless of what the district looks like.

"I'm OK if it's Trump plus 20," Clyburn said while describing the potential Republican advantage in a reshaped district. "I would be running where I live."

The Republican-led House already had passed a plan that would reconfigure Clyburn's district, void the results of current congressional primaries and instead hold new U.S. House primaries in August.

Trump had lobbied for the plan, making at least two phone calls to Republican state Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey and also phoning in to a private meeting of Republican senators earlier this month. He also had maintained the pressure on social media.

But debate stalled in the Senate, where Democrats were staunchly opposed and some GOP lawmakers were concerned that aggressive redistricting could backfire by making some Republican-held seats vulnerable to losses because of the addition of Democratic voters.

Clyburn noted that when state lawmakers last redrew congressional districts, after the 2020 census, they spent months holding meetings across the state to gather public suggestions. Although that map resulted in a 6-1 seat advantage for Republicans over Democrats, the process was orderly and fair, he said.

"When the map was challenged, the U.S. Supreme Court said, yes, this is constitutional," Clyburn said. But now, "this White House says, to hell with the process, to hell with the Constitution, just do what we want done."

Trump administration proposes NDAs for federal employees to stop media leaks

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration wants all current and future federal employees to sign non-disclosure agreements, part of a continuing crackdown on leaks to the media.

A proposed notice, announced Tuesday on the Office of Personnel Management website, is expected to be officially published in the Federal Register on Wednesday, seeking comment on a draft NDA to be used by federal agencies for "both new and existing employees."

"The form is intended to document Federal employees' acknowledgment of, and agreement to comply with, current legal obligations to safeguard non-public, confidential, or proprietary information, created or obtained through their official duties, while expressly preserving the right to make disclosures authorized by law," the notice said.

The proposed notice seeks comment on several questions, including whether the NDA should cover only unclassified information and what appropriate actions, if any, agencies should consider for new or current employees who choose not to sign the agreement.

The OPM noted "several recent instances" where internal agency communications related to rulemaking and policy development were disclosed without authorization. It also discussed specific instances in which federal employees at the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security disclosed information about planned immigration enforcement actions without authorization.

In one case, The New York Times and The Washington Post received unauthorized information on the U.S. raid on Venezuela this past January and delayed "publishing what they knew to avoid endangering U.S. troops," the OPM request for comment said.

A Washington Post spokesperson declined to comment.

Charles Stadtlander, executive director of Media Relations and Communications for the Times, said in an email that the paper had extensive reporting on operations targeting Venezuela and preparations for land-based military operations. "Contrary to some claims, however, The Times did not have verified details about the pending operation to capture Maduro or a story prepared, nor did we withhold publication at the request of the Trump administration."

Ferretting out leaks that the administration deems harmful to its messaging has been a priority across multiple agencies since President Donald Trump returned to the White House. As part of that crackdown, the FBI in January seized the electronic devices of a Washington Post reporter, a move that alarmed media organizations and advocates of press freedom.

One other notable incident occurred last year when dozens of reporters turned in their access badges at the Pentagon, rejecting new rules imposed by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth that would leave journalists vulnerable to expulsion if they sought to report on information — classified or otherwise — that had not been approved by Hegseth for release.

Michael L. Vogelsang Jr., an attorney at the Employment Law Group, said he has questions, among them: "What gap is an NDA supposed to fill that doesn't already exist?"

He noted that statutes already exist regarding the leaking of classified and sensitive information. There's also a law passed by Congress, he noted, that prohibits employers from implementing or enforcing an NDA.

He said: "So Congress has already said NDAs are a no-go. So how can OPM make a regulation that violates the law?"

The American Federation of Government Employees National President Everett Kelley said in a statement that OPM's proposed rule is part of a continuing effort to silence federal employees.

"This proposed NDA is another attempt by the administration to purge the civil service of nonpartisan

career employees and replace them with loyalists who won't speak out against waste, fraud, and abuse," Kelley said.

Venue gets mixed reviews as National Spelling Bee returns to DC ahead of White House UFC event

By BEN NUCKOLS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After 15 years at a convention center in suburban Maryland, the Scripps National Spelling Bee moved this year to a grand stage befitting the stakes of the competition: Constitution Hall, Washington's largest dedicated concert venue.

Not everyone at this week's competition appreciates the change.

"I feel like they should not have moved it. The old venue was better. Because it's a bit of a hassle, getting on the bus and going there and then coming back," said 14-year-old Yahya Mohammed, a three-time speller from Hoffman Estates, Illinois. "The old venue was more spacious, and it feels kind of isolated in the hotel."

As the National Spelling Bee began with Tuesday's preliminary rounds, spellers and their families marveled at the historical significance of their new venue and the nearby cultural opportunities while also dealing with logistical hurdles: crowded hallways, limited dining options and shuttle bus rides to and from their hotel.

Built in 1929 by the Daughters of the American Revolution, Constitution Hall sits a few blocks from the Washington Monument and the White House. Spellers and their families are staying at the nearby J.W. Marriott, a favored haunt of lobbyists and interest groups, and the quickest route to the competition venue would normally be a stroll across the Ellipse, the grassy expanse south of the Executive Mansion.

However, the Ellipse is surrounded by temporary fencing and security checkpoints as crews construct an outdoor octagon on the South Lawn of the White House for UFC Freedom 250, a June 14 event timed for President Donald Trump's 80th birthday and marking the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding.

"Two very disparate forms of entertainment," said Rajeev Malhotra of Boston, the father of speller Rajeev Malhotra, describing the bee and the mixed martial arts extravaganza.

Venue change brings heavy security but plenty of history and culture

Security was beefed up at the hall, with guards and metal detectors stationed at every entrance and explosive-sniffing dogs patrolling the hallways. Three blocks away and three days earlier, a man opened fire at a White House security checkpoint, injuring a bystander before he was fatally shot by Secret Service officers.

At the prior venue, the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in Oxon Hill, Maryland, spellers moved freely throughout the building, roaming between their hotel rooms, the ballroom that housed the competition stage and a massive food court where they grabbed quick meals between last-minute study sessions.

"Last year was better," said Arpit Aggarwal of Columbia, Missouri, whose daughter, Ananya, is competing for the second time. "Everything was in one place."

"It's an adjustment," Ananya's mom, Deepti Bahl, said diplomatically.

Other spellers appreciated the buzz of gathering downtown, saying it was more appropriate for a national competition. The bee began in 1925 and was held at a series of Washington hotels before it moved to the suburbs in 2011.

"I just love being here, right next to the National Mall. You can see the Smithsonian, you can see the Jefferson Memorial. It's such a lively and unique city and I love being in the heart of it," said three-time speller Oliver Halkett, a 14-year-old from Los Angeles. "There's so much history, there's so much culture. The memorials and the museums are fascinating to go to."

Speller Andie Seavey of Fairbanks, Alaska, and her mom, Kristin, went to see the musical "The Great Gatsby" at the National Theater next door to the hotel.

After 80 spellers were eliminated Tuesday during onstage spelling and vocabulary rounds, the remaining 167 competitors reconvened at the hotel for a high-stakes written test that determined the 100 or so

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who would move on to Wednesday morning's quarterfinals. The competition concludes Thursday night.

At the spelling bee, the bell is not necessarily the end

Last year, Faizan Zaki won the National Spelling Bee even though he misspelled a word and heard the dreaded bell rung by head judge Mary Brooks. In fact, he knew it after a few letters. He stopped spelling and told Brooks, "Just ring the bell."

Faizan's flub let his two remaining competitors back in, since all three misspelled during the round.

Kushi Gottimukkala of Morrisville, North Carolina, is one of a few spellers competing this year who know what that feels like.

At her regional bee, sponsored by the NFL's Carolina Panthers, it was down to Kushi and two other spellers for the final spot at nationals. She misspelled "anchialine," and she thought it was over, only to see the other two spellers mess up.

Kushi rode the emotional roller coaster and ultimately got through.

"I was still thinking about the mistake, but I was also really grateful that I got a second chance, and so I took that into consideration and decided to focus on my next word," she said.

Spellers have to prepare for the possibility that missing a word isn't necessarily the end.

Oliver Halkett, too, has competed in a bee where he got a word wrong but wasn't eliminated. He battled through the disappointment by focusing only on the word in front of him.

"It's a peculiar situation, but I think, above all, mental clarity is so important, especially in those latter rounds," he said. "I close my eyes and do some deep breathing and I visualize the word, and it's just me and the word. That's how you have to approach every single word.

"Treat every word as if it's your first and last word."

Trump wraps up 3-hour medical visit to Walter Reed and declares 'Everything checked out PERFECTLY'

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump had another medical exam on Tuesday, putting his health under renewed public scrutiny after he has worked to dismiss concerns over his age and stamina.

The 79-year-old president spent more than three hours at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for what the White House described as preventive medical and dental checkups. It was Trump's fourth publicly disclosed medical exam since he returned to office for a second term, and it comes as he tries to project strength ahead of midterm elections that will test his sway with voters.

In a social media post after the visit, Trump said that he had just finished his "6 month physical" and that "Everything checked out PERFECTLY."

The White House did not immediately release a written report from Trump's doctors.

For decades, administrations have released selected results from presidential physicals, offering the public a glimpse at the commander-in-chief's health. But the results are filtered through the White House and must be approved by the president, raising questions about what the public does and doesn't get to see.

Trump, a Republican, turns 80 next month and was the oldest person elected U.S. president. His immediate predecessor, President Joe Biden, a Democrat, was 82 when he left office, dropping out of the 2024 presidential race because of widespread concerns he was too old for the job.

A Washington Post/ABC News/Ipsos poll conducted in April found that less than half of U.S. adults think Trump has the mental sharpness or physical health to serve effectively as president.

"I think concern for the president's physical health is probably at an all-time high, and I think advanced physical age is the No. 1 concern," said Dr. Jeffrey Kuhlman, who served as a White House physician for more than a decade under Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

For a president of Trump's age, a complete physical would be expected to include advanced heart testing, screening for common cancers and a cognitive assessment, along with basics like height, weight and blood pressure, Kuhlman said.

The White House has not disclosed what the visit entailed but expressed confidence in what it will show.

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"President Trump is the sharpest and most accessible President in American history who is working nonstop to solve problems and deliver on his promises, and he remains in excellent health," White House spokesperson Davis Ingle said in a statement.

No law requiring presidents to disclose their medical records

In the weeks leading up to his visit, Trump has been saying he feels as good as he did five decades ago — even as he jokes about his fondness for fast food and his minimal exercise regimen. Yet he's also sensitive to perceptions about his age, noting that he takes extra caution descending the steps from Air Force One to avoid headlines about a stumble.

There is no law requiring presidents to publicize their health records, and the degree of transparency has varied by administration. Trump's past reports have been criticized for offering scant detail and for providing statistics that some medical experts have viewed with skepticism.

At public appearances, Trump is often seen wearing makeup to conceal bruising on his hands, which the White House attributes to handshaking and regular aspirin use. He has sometimes appeared drowsy during meetings and closed his eyes for long stretches, though he denies having fallen asleep.

Trump often boasts of having "aced" cognitive tests while frequently deriding Biden, who faced questions about his mental acuity. Biden and his aides pushed back aggressively against doubts raised about his fitness for office.

Some of Trump's previous physicals have included the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, used to screen for dementia and cognitive impairment. Trump's physicians reported a score of 30 out of 30 for him at his 2018 and 2025 checkups.

Yet critics have pointed to Trump's meandering speeches and sometimes bellicose rhetoric as evidence of cognitive decline.

Last month, a statement from more than 30 neurologists, psychiatrists and other medical experts — who acknowledged they've never examined him — said Trump was mentally unfit to serve and warned of an "increasingly dangerous decline" in his behavior based on what they called "objectively observable signs of serious medical concern."

"Any so-called medical professionals engaging in armchair diagnosis or false speculation for political purposes are clearly breaking the Hippocratic Oath they've sworn to," Ingle said.

Just like any other patient, presidents get to choose what's disclosed about their health, said Sara Rosenthal, a bioethicist at the University of Kentucky who studies presidential health. Questions about transparency have become more acute as America elects aging presidents like Trump and Biden, she said.

"I think we can expect very little disclosure about the true health status of any president unless they're in perfect health," said Rosenthal, who has suggested an independent medical organization to review and report on the health of the president and those in the line of succession.

'Nothing should be hidden'

Trump's first medical report in his second term was released last April. In July, he was diagnosed with chronic venous insufficiency, a common condition in older adults that causes blood to pool in his veins. Photographs have shown the president with swollen feet, ankles and calves, described by the White House as a symptom of chronic venous insufficiency leading to "mild swelling" in his lower legs.

Following his last publicly disclosed exam, described as a routine follow-up last October, Trump's physician issued a one-page summary saying the president was in "exceptional health" without divulging many specific results.

The frequency of Trump's medical checkups is not uncommon for someone his age, according to S. Jay Olshansky of the University of Illinois-Chicago, who has studied the health of past presidents. It's part of a strategy to catch problems while they're still treatable, Olshansky said.

Olshansky says the public deserves to see more than White House medical summaries that "may be subject to editorial discretion." Full, unredacted medical records should be made public, he said: "Nothing should be hidden."

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Another surge for Micron, Wall Street's latest \$1 trillion company, sends US stocks to records

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market rose to records Tuesday as it caught up with climbs for others around the world from the day before, when President Donald Trump said negotiations were “proceeding nicely” with Iran on ending their war.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.6% after trading resumed following Monday’s holiday and set an all-time high. The Nasdaq composite rallied 1.2% to set its own record, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 118 points, or 0.2%, from its all-time high.

Stock markets in much of the rest of the world pulled back from their gains the day before, as fighting continued in the region and the U.S. military said it carried out “self-defense” strikes in southern Iran, including on missile launch sites and boats placing mines. Markets have rallied in the past on hopes for a coming end to the war with Iran, only to see the conflict drag on.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 3.5% to \$96.67, but that reclaimed only some of its plunge from Monday. The price for a barrel of U.S crude oil, meanwhile, fell 2.8% to settle at \$93.89.

Oil prices have been at the center of financial markets’ action since the United States and Israel attacked Iran in late February. The ensuing war has closed the Strait of Hormuz and kept oil tankers pent up in the Persian Gulf instead of delivering crude to customers worldwide. That in turn has driven up oil’s price and sent a wave of painful inflation around the world.

Hopes for a deal to improve the flow of oil helped lift stocks of companies with big fuel bills. United Airlines rose 6%, and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings steamed 4.9% higher.

Big technology stocks also continued their big runs. Micron Technology’s stock leaped 19.3% to top \$895.88 and was the strongest force lifting the S&P 500 after analysts at UBS led by Timothy Arcuri raised their 12-month price target for the stock to \$1,625 from \$535.

The analysts are forecasting continued strength in demand for computer memory, and Micron’s stock has already more than tripled so far this year. It’s the latest Big Tech company to top an overall value of \$1 trillion and joined such behemoths as Nvidia, Apple and Microsoft, which have each blown past \$3 trillion.

On the losing side of Wall Street was AutoZone, which dropped 9% after reporting slightly weaker revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. CEO Phil Daniele said performance for the retailer’s stores in Brazil and Mexico was below its plan, though its overall profit topped analysts’ expectations.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 45.65 points to 7,519.12. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 118.02 to 50,461.68, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 312.21 to 26,656.18.

Lower oil prices helped pull yields down in the U.S. bond market, which eased the pressure on Wall Street. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.49% from 4.56% late Friday.

It’s a respite following recent gains for yields in bond markets worldwide, which threatened 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 artificial-intelligence data centers that have supported the U.S. economy’s growth recently.

Most big U.S. companies have been reporting both profit and revenue for the start of 2026 above what analysts expected. The strong performances have helped vault U.S. stocks to records, even with all the uncertainty around oil prices and the war with Iran.

U.S. households have been feeling discouraged about the economy because of accelerating inflation, and a report on Tuesday said consumer confidence edged downward in May, though the number was not as bad as economists expected. It followed a report on Friday that said sentiment among U.S. consumers hit its lowest level on record.

In stock markets abroad, many indexes slipped, including a 0.2% dip for Japan’s Nikkei 225 from its all-time high set the day before.

South Korea's Kospi jumped 2.5% as it caught up with other markets following its closure on Monday for a holiday. London's FTSE 100 added 0.2% even though British petroleum giant BP fell 4% there. BP ousted its chairman over what it called serious concerns related to "important governance standards, oversight and conduct."

Iran condemns US strikes as a show of 'bad faith' and begins restoring internet after long shutdown

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran on Tuesday denounced the most recent U.S. strikes as a sign of "bad faith and unreliability" as negotiations pressed on toward a possible deal to end the war, and the Islamic Republic began restoring internet access after one of the longest nationwide shutdowns ever.

The U.S. military characterized Monday's strikes in southern Iran as defensive, with targets that included missile launch sites and minelaying boats, and said the U.S. acted with "restraint" in light of the weekslong ceasefire.

Iran's foreign ministry called the strikes a ceasefire violation and warned that Washington would bear responsibility for "all consequences," without elaborating.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will leave no act of aggression unanswered," it added in a statement.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said Tuesday that it shot down at least one drone and deterred another drone and a fighter jet that entered its airspace, according to Iran's official Mizan news agency. It didn't specify when the incidents occurred.

Iran's supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, used a statement about Islam's annual Hajj pilgrimage to address his country's confrontation with the U.S. and Israel, declaring that other Mideast nations "will no longer serve as a shield" for U.S. military bases. Iran has previously complained about U.S. military facilities in the region and targeted them.

It was not immediately clear what the developments would mean for negotiations.

Iranian state TV reported Tuesday that Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi left Qatar, where talks had been taking place. The report did not elaborate or point to any next steps.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio projected that talks on extending the ceasefire and reopening the crucial Strait of Hormuz will "take a few days."

Iranians get back online, to some extent

Meanwhile, Iranian authorities eased a monthslong internet shutdown that they cast as a wartime necessity, but that has cost the country's economy an estimated \$30 million to \$40 million a day. Internet users reported that access was gradually being restored, at least in some places. State media said fixed broadband service was back. It was unclear when mobile internet would be widely restored.

Iran has long enforced filters and policed content on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. But before the war, Iranians could bypass restrictions with cheap virtual private networks, known as VPNs, and other easy workarounds.

Authorities cut off internet access in January during massive anti-government demonstrations and later began to relax those restrictions before imposing a complete internet blackout after the U.S. and Israel attacked on Feb. 28.

The internet outage made it difficult for Iranians outside the country to maintain contact with loved ones, and the lack of connectivity devastated the country's relatively vibrant online businesses, putting further pressure on an already battered economy.

An execution in Iran

In other developments, Iran hanged a man it convicted of spying for Israel, the latest of more than two dozen allegedly espionage- and security-related executions since the war intensified a crackdown on dissent.

The Iranian judiciary's news outlet, Mizanonline, identified the man as Gholamreza Khani Shakarab, calling him "a ringleader" for operations for Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad, and accusing him of recruiting members inside and outside Iran to work against the nation's security. He was involved in sports

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and traveled to neighboring countries, according to the news agency.

Activists and rights groups say Iran routinely holds closed-door trials in which defendants are unable to challenge accusations and often are forced to confess.

The official judiciary agency said the country's Supreme Court had upheld Shakarab's death sentence.

Global food official concerned about strait closure

The U.S. strikes were the latest flare-up in the fragile ceasefire that began April 7 and has largely held.

Negotiations center in part on the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway off southern Iran through which a fifth of the world's crude oil and natural gas passed before the war began. Once the fighting started, Tehran retaliated by effectively closing the strait, stranding hundreds of ships, shocking the global economy, disrupting energy markets and squeezing fertilizer supplies worldwide.

Iran has let a limited number of ships pass and has charged tolls. The Revolutionary Guard navy said Tuesday that 25 oil tankers, container ships and other commercial vessels were allowed to pass in the previous 24 hours, according to state broadcaster IRIB. Before the war, over 100 ships a day went through the strait.

The full effect of the fertilizer crunch might not become clear until harvests that are months away. U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization Director-General Qu Dongyu warned Tuesday at an event in Rome that "the decisions we make now will determine whether this remains a manageable shock or evolves into a deeper global food security crisis in 2026 and 2027 and beyond."

The strait has become a powerful lever for Tehran in talks, joining the long-running issue of Iran's nuclear program and its highly enriched uranium. Iran wants the U.S. to lift its military blockade of Iranian ports that began on April 17.

In the nearby Gulf of Oman, an explosion was reported Tuesday aboard a tanker, according to the U.K. Maritime Trade Operations Center. No one was injured, and there was no immediate information on the cause.

Trump administration raises US refugee cap, but only for white South Africans

By REBECCA SANTANA and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said Tuesday that it will admit an additional 10,000 white South Africans into the U.S. as refugees this year, increasing its historically low annual cap but still blocking people from other countries from entering through the program.

Trump suspended the refugee program on his first day in office and, since then, has turned it into a vehicle to allow Afrikaners — a group of white South Africans descended mainly from Dutch settlers — into the U.S. Advocates say the decision to focus a decades-old program on one group has left people around the world fleeing war and strife stranded and with few options.

The administration says Afrikaners are subject to persecution in their home country, a charge the government in South Africa denies.

In the Tuesday announcement on the Federal Register, President Donald Trump said that because of "an unforeseen emergency refugee situation" he was raising the refugee cap. He blamed the South African government for "recent increases in the incitement of racially motivated violence" but gave no specific information.

"I hereby determine that the admission to the United States of Afrikaners from South Africa in response to this emergency is justified by the grave humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest," Trump said in the announcement.

Democrats criticize refugee cap

The administration indicated last year that it would approve up to 7,500, mostly Afrikaners, during the fiscal year stretching from October 2025 through September 2026, but last week, in a notice to Congress informing it of the increase, the administration said that "unforeseen developments in South Africa created an emergency refugee situation." The change raises the limit to 17,500.

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Christopher Landau, the deputy secretary of state, and Troy Edgar, the deputy secretary of Homeland Security, met with key congressional committees on Thursday as part of the legally required consultation process with lawmakers, according to two people who were granted anonymity to discuss a private meeting.

During the hour-long session, Landau told lawmakers that one of the ways that Afrikaners had faced persecution at home was the erasure of their history in school textbooks, according to the people with knowledge of the meeting. The discussion infuriated Democrats, who called the approach and the consultation "indefensible."

The State Department did not return a request for comment on the interaction.

"The administration's shameful approach to refugee resettlement is organized around prioritizing white-only Afrikaners and betraying everyone else, including thousands of Afghan allies who risked their lives for our nation, and thousands of other approved and vetted refugees twisting in the wind," said Democratic Sens. Dick Durbin of Illinois and Alex Padilla of California, and Democratic Reps. Jamie Raskin of Maryland and Pramila Jayapal of Washington in a statement.

Inside the meeting, Democrats also pressed the administration on religious minorities in other nations, particularly in Iran, and House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan indicated that it was an issue the administration should look at, the people said. Jordan raised the case of Saleh Mohammadi, a 19-year-old star wrestler who was hanged in Iran with two other young men in March after being sentenced on charges of "moharabeh," or "waging war against God," another person with knowledge of the meeting said.

Thousands of mostly white South Africans already admitted

The State Department has already approved more than 6,000 people through the refugee program since the beginning of the fiscal year in October, according to official data. All of those were from South Africa except for three people from Afghanistan.

Presidents set the cap on how many refugees the U.S. will approve through the program each year, and historically, they've allocated those numbers across various geographic regions while factoring in wars or conflicts that spark humanitarian needs around the globe.

The refugee program, administered by the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security, is distinct from asylum. People hoping to come through the refugee program must be living abroad and undergo vetting and other checks before being admitted to the U.S., whereas those seeking asylum are already on U.S. soil. A visa, however, is not a guarantee that the holder will be allowed to enter the U.S.

During his first administration, Trump slashed the number of refugees approved every year. Then the Biden administration built the system back up, setting a goal of admitting 125,000 refugees in his last year in office.

Groups that have for decades helped resettle refugees in the U.S. have sued to allow people who were in the refugee application process but are now stranded to be allowed to come to the U.S.

"For nearly half a century, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program embodied a simple but powerful, bipartisan idea: that the United States would offer safety to the world's most vulnerable refugees," said Beth Oppenheim, President & CEO of HIAS, in a statement. "This administration is now dismantling that legacy in plain sight."

Woman fired by Indiana university over Charlie Kirk post to receive \$225,000 legal settlement

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

A woman fired by an Indiana university over her Facebook post criticizing conservative activist Charlie Kirk after he was killed will receive \$225,000 to settle a lawsuit that accused her former employer of violating her free-speech rights, the woman's attorneys said Tuesday.

The American Civil Liberties Union announced the settlement in a federal lawsuit it filed last year on behalf of Suzanne Swierc against Ball State University President Geoffrey Mearns.

Swierc worked as director of health promotion and advocacy at Ball State's campus in Muncie, Indiana, before she was fired last September. Ball State cited Swierc's private Facebook post about Kirk as the sole

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reason for her termination, saying it caused "significant disruption" to the campus.

Swierc's firing violated her constitutional rights because she was "speaking as a private citizen on a matter of public concern," said Stevie Pactor, an ACLU attorney in Indiana.

"The First Amendment does not allow government institutions to retaliate in those circumstances, and this settlement reflects that," Pactor said in a statement.

Mearns defended firing Swierc in a statement sent Tuesday to campus leaders, which a Ball State spokesperson shared with The Associated Press.

Mearns said backlash over Swierc's post threatened to harm the school's student enrollment and fundraising. He said the settlement's "modest monetary payment" to Swierc was substantially less than fighting her lawsuit would have cost.

Kirk, founder of the conservative organization Turning Point USA, was killed by a gunman Sept. 10 on the campus of a Utah university. Before his death, Kirk was credited with galvanizing the conservative youth vote to help President Donald Trump win a second term.

Others fired for Kirk posts have won six-figure settlements

Swierc was among a wave of workers who lost their jobs in both the public and private sector after posting social media comments and memes about Kirk's assassination. And she isn't the first to win a legal settlement in court.

Earlier this month, a Florida state agency agreed to pay \$485,000 to settle a lawsuit by a former state biologist who was fired after she reposted a meme that claimed Kirk wouldn't care about children being shot in school.

In January, Austin Peay State University in Tennessee reinstated a professor and paid him a \$500,000 settlement after he sued over his firing for posting a 2023 news headline that read: "Charlie Kirk Says Gun Deaths 'Unfortunately' Worth it to Keep 2nd Amendment."

Lawsuits by other fired workers are still pending.

Ball State says employee's post led to a flood of outrage

In her Facebook post, Swierc referred to Kirk's killing as a "tragedy." But she also called it a "reflection of the violence, fear, and hatred he sowed." She wrote: "If you think Charlie Kirk was a wonderful person, we can't be friends."

Swierc's attorneys said her Facebook page's privacy settings walled off her posts from the general public, but someone took a screen shot of her comments on Kirk that was shared widely online.

Ball State's president said Swierc's post resulted in a flood of outraged phone calls and emails to the university. Some warned they would withhold donations and at least one parent said she planned to withdraw her children from the school. Some callers threatened violence, Mearns said.

"The reaction was extraordinarily damaging to our University's reputation and image, and it was exceptionally disruptive to our mission and our people," Mearns said in his statement.

As US stock market hits new highs, 2 of 3 Americans are cutting back on spending, survey shows

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. consumer confidence declined slightly this month as gas prices stayed high and inflation remained elevated, a sharp contrast to soaring stock prices hover near record levels.

The Conference Board's consumer confidence index slipped 0.7 points to 93.1 in May, the first decline after three months of gains. The measure hasn't fallen as much this year as other gauges of consumer attitudes, but it has been stuck at a low level since the pandemic. Before COVID-19, it regularly reached 130.

A separate gauge of consumer sentiment released last week by the University of Michigan fell to a record low this month. Soaring gas and food costs have worsened inflation that is outpacing the average growth in paychecks, reducing most Americans' purchasing power. Americans have soured on President Trump's economic policies, polls show, potentially creating problems for Republicans heading into the midterm elections.

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Consumer sentiment is mostly gloomy even as the economy is still growing and the unemployment rate has stayed low. Some economists argue that the gap reflects inequality in a "K-shaped" economy, with higher-income Americans benefitting from rising stock prices and still spending while lower-income households struggle.

Tuesday's consumer confidence survey showed that confidence grew among households with incomes at or above \$100,000, while it fell for most others.

"The prospect of higher prices and faster inflation continues to loom over confidence readings with many households taking a more cautious approach to purchases this year," Ben Ayers, Nationwide senior economist, said.

There were some positive signs, Ayers noted: Americans' expectations for growth six months in the future improved, potentially a sign they expect the Iran war to be over by then.

Still, Americans' outlook on the job market worsened slightly. The proportion of respondents who said jobs are "plentiful" dropped to 25.5%, the lowest in three years. At the same time, just 18.6% said jobs were "hard to get," the smallest percentage since October. The findings reflect the "low-hire, low-fire" job market that has made it harder for those out of work to obtain new jobs.

Gas prices have soared to a nationwide average of \$4.49 a gallon from \$2.98 just before the war began at the end of February, and have been at or above \$4.50 a gallon for nearly all of May.

This month, the Conference Board added special questions to its survey, which found rising prices have caused most Americans to change their spending habits. Two-thirds of respondents said they are cutting back spending in response to the increases, with most of those reducing overall purchases and delaying more expensive acquisitions.

Many consumers are also planning to economize on clothes, shoes, hobby items, and toys and games, the survey found.

Inflation jumped to 3.8% in April, the highest in three years and far above the Federal Reserve's 2% target. In addition to more expensive gas, grocery prices have also started rising more quickly, likely driven by higher shipping costs. Beef prices have also risen sharply, as drought and other factors have reduced cattle herds.

The higher prices are reducing Americans' average inflation-adjusted incomes. Average hourly earnings, adjusted for price changes, shrank in April from a year earlier for the first time in three years.

Other data also suggests consumers have grown more cautious amid rising prices. Adjusted for inflation, retail sales actually declined in April, after a solid increase in March.

And the University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index fell to a record-low 44.8 in May, its third straight decline, as a majority of respondents said rising prices were hurting their personal finances.

Supreme Court won't intervene in discrimination suit led by Black ex-head coach Flores against NFL

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to intervene in a discrimination lawsuit led by former Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores against the NFL, allowing the case to proceed toward trial.

The justices rebuffed an appeal from the league, which wanted the case handled through its arbitration process rather than open court in New York. Justice Brett Kavanaugh dissented from the decision not to hear the case.

Flores, who's Black, sued the league and three teams in February 2022, alleging the league was "rife with racism" regarding its hiring practices when it comes to Black coaches. He was later joined in the lawsuit by fellow Black coaches Steve Wilks and Ray Horton.

Flores, who was fired by the Dolphins shortly before the suit was filed, is now the Minnesota Vikings' defensive coordinator.

The NFL has argued Flores should go through arbitration rather than the legal system, but lower courts

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have sided with the plaintiffs. The league said it respected the Supreme Court decision, which allows lower-court rulings to stay in place, but is "fully prepared to defend ourselves as this matter proceeds."

David Gottlieb and Douglas Wigdor, attorneys for the plaintiffs, said they were pleased with the decision. "The NFL must now accept that its commissioner cannot be the arbitrator over discrimination claims against the league and its teams. We look forward to litigating these claims in court," they said in a statement.

Flores was fired after posting a 24-25 record over three years without a playoff appearance. The Dolphins did have back-to-back winning seasons before Flores was dismissed.

Flores sued the NFL as well as the Denver Broncos, the New York Giants and the Houston Texans. He interviewed with the Broncos in 2019 and the Giants and Texans in 2022.

Wilks, who was fired as the New York Jets' defensive coordinator in December, joined the lawsuit by claiming the Arizona Cardinals in 2018 hired him as a "bridge coach" — promoting him to interim coach after they fired another coach but then passing over him for the full-time role. He said the Cardinals didn't provide him with a realistic chance to succeed.

Horton, who last coached in the NFL in 2019, alleged the Tennessee Titans didn't offer him a genuine interview for the head coaching position in 2016.

Search continues for 7 villagers trapped in a flooded cave in Laos

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Rescuers tried to reach seven villagers trapped inside a flooded cave in Laos for the seventh day on Tuesday, with difficult terrain and weather impeding their efforts. There has been no contact with them since they became trapped.

The villagers entered the cave in Xaisomboun province on May 19, but heavy rain triggered flash flooding that blocked their exit, according to Lao and Thai rescue teams involved in the operation.

The Lao organization Rescue Volunteer for People, which is working closely with the local authorities, posted on its Facebook page that Tuesday's operation plan included exploring air shafts above the cave in hopes of identifying possible access points and locating the trapped people.

Rescue workers from neighboring Thailand arrived at the site over the weekend to assist the operation. Those helping out include divers from several nations who took part in the complicated 2018 rescue in northern Thailand of 12 schoolboys and their soccer coach who were trapped for more than two weeks in a cave before being safely extricated.

Challenging conditions hamper rescue efforts

According to rescuers, divers have navigated about 100 meters (330 feet) into the flooded, narrow cave. They believe the villagers may be trapped about 30 meters (100 feet) beyond the furthest point currently accessible and are also working to pump water out of the cave to aid the rescue operation.

The site is in a rugged, remote area in Xaisomboun province's Longcheng district, which is about 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of the capital, Vientiane. Rescuers at the scene have detailed on social media the challenging mountainous terrain and heavy rain that is hampering their work.

Videos shared online by Thai rescuers showed that reaching the cave's entrance requires a steep hike on foot of roughly 4 kilometers (2.5 miles). The entrance is also steep and rocky, and barely wide enough for a single person at a time to climb through.

Inside, rescuers must make their way through muddy passageways, flooded sections and narrow tunnels that forced them to crawl.

Claus Rasmussen, a diving instructor based on the Thai island of Phuket who took part in the 2018 rescue in Thailand's Chiang Rai province, told The Associated Press he has been following the situation in Laos, although he is not currently involved.

"The villagers up there are used to living on very little, but that also means that they may not have a lot of sustenance in their body to actually deal with whatever is going on," he said in a video interview.

He noted that other circumstances also weigh against them: the possibility of collapsed tunnels, physical injuries "and everything else, which obviously increase that risk of them not coming through it in a safe

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manner.”

Villagers were reportedly mining

There has been no official confirmation on why the villagers went into the cave.

However, Bounkham Luanglath of the Lao rescue group said that the cave was frequented by local residents looking for gold, even though authorities had repeatedly warned them against entering the cave out of safety concerns.

The average per capita income in Laos of about \$2,000-2,500 is among the lowest in Southeast Asia, and it is much less in rural areas.

Laos is not known as a major gold producer, but its mining industry is sizable considering the country's developing economy. The mining sector is fueled by foreign direct investment, largely from neighboring Thailand and China. Copper is a major export, and mining for rare earth elements, needed for most modern technologies, has become more common in Laos recently.

The Laos Foreign Ministry on Tuesday said it has no official information to share with the media. The Southeast Asian nation is a one-party communist state with no organized opposition and the government keeps a tight lid on information.

Cave rescues are risky business

The cave crisis quickly drew headlines in Thailand because of its resemblance to the dramatic 2018 cave rescue in northern Thailand, which became a global sensation. A former Thai navy SEAL diver died during that search and rescue effort.

A major health risk for those trapped in a cave is cold conditions quickly leading to hypothermia. The body can cope for weeks without food, but clean water is necessary to prevent dehydration. A contaminated water supply could cause diarrhea, hastening dehydration.

Declining oxygen levels cause symptoms similar to altitude sickness and in the long run can damage the lungs and other organs, while carbon dioxide buildup causes exhaustion and eventual unconsciousness.

Constant darkness disrupts time perception and the body's circadian rhythms. It also causes extreme sensitivity when the eyes have to adjust again to light.

Recalling the 2018 rescue operation in Thailand, when fears were high for the boys' fate, diver Rasmussen said it showed survival is possible even when it appears unlikely.

“Here it is still a rescue until proven otherwise,” he said. “And that's the way that people have to go forward.”

Search continues for 7 villagers trapped in a flooded cave in Laos

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Russia maintains attacks on Ukraine, as Kyiv is warned to brace for a possible major barrage

By SUSIE BLANN and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

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KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired more than 100 drones and two ballistic missiles at Ukraine overnight, the Ukrainian air force said Tuesday, as the country's foreign ministry noted that Moscow's recent threat to hit Kyiv especially hard from the air brought nothing new.

Russia on Monday urged foreign citizens, including members of diplomatic missions, to leave the Ukrainian capital as quickly as possible and told residents to steer clear of military and government facilities. It said that "systemic strikes" on Kyiv were being prepared.

Russia has regularly bombarded Kyiv, often causing dozens of civilian casualties with every attack, since it launched an all-out invasion of neighboring Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio by phone Monday that the U.S. should evacuate its diplomatic staff from Kyiv, a foreign ministry statement said. Rubio didn't say whether the U.S. State Department would take that step, but expressed concern during a trip to India that the "terrible" war in Ukraine could escalate further.

The Trump administration has tried for more than a year to stop the war. But its efforts yielded no significant breakthrough and are now on ice as Washington focuses on the Iran war.

No diplomats say they are leaving Kyiv

There were no announcements of diplomatic departures from Kyiv. The European Union, French and Polish delegations publicly said that they would not leave.

The European Union summoned Russia's representative in Brussels to convey its concerns Tuesday, with European Commission spokesperson Anitta Hipper accusing Russia of "trying to sow panic."

French Foreign Ministry spokesman Pascal Confavreux called the Russian threat "new intimidation from Moscow."

The level of security threats posed by Russia to Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities "remains the same as in previous years and months," Ukraine's foreign ministry said in a statement late Monday.

Russia has continuously launched missile and drone attacks on the capital, it pointed out, adding that Ukraine was prepared to assist diplomatic missions seeking additional security measures.

Russia could target bunkers, official says

Andrei Kartapolov, head of the defense affairs committee in Russia's State Duma, said that the Ukrainian parliament and presidential office aren't among potential targets.

Kartapolov said that possible attacks could aim at underground bunkers used by various branches of Ukraine's armed forces, security agencies and other government structures.

"Those are well-concealed and fortified facilities, and our task is to spot and target them with the weapons we have," Kartapolov said in remarks carried by Parlamentskaya Gazeta, the official publication of the Russian parliament.

Russia said its biggest missile attack of the year last weekend was in response to Friday's deadly Ukrainian drone strike on what Moscow said was a college dormitory in Starobilsk, a city in Ukraine's Russia-occupied Luhansk region.

But the Ukrainian General Staff said that its strike in Starobilsk hit the local headquarters of the Russian military's special drone unit.

Ukraine remains short of air defense missiles

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that sophisticated American-made air defense systems that Ukraine needs in order to stop Russian ballistic missiles are in short supply because of the Iran war.

"Unfortunately, there has been no progress for a long time with America on expanding the production of anti-ballistic capabilities," Zelenskyy said on social media late Monday, adding that Kyiv is working with Europe to improve its own anti-ballistic capabilities in sufficient quantities.

He said that Ukrainian battlefield gains in recent months have enabled it to "stabilize" the 1,250-kilometer (780-mile) front line in eastern and southern Ukraine, suggesting that Kyiv's forces are holding their own against Russia's bigger army.

Russia's spring offensive is floundering as Ukraine's midrange drone strikes disrupt its rear supply lines, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

Moscow's warning of major strikes aims to distract public attention from its "poor battlefield perfor-

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mance" and an economic pinch caused by war costs and international sanctions, the Washington-based think tank said late Monday.

Today in History: May 27, the Golden Gate Bridge opens

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, May 27, the 147th day of 2026. There are 218 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 27, 1937, the newly completed Golden Gate Bridge connecting San Francisco and Marin County, California, was opened to pedestrian traffic (vehicles began crossing the next day).

Also on this date:

In 1896, 255 people were killed when a devastating F4 tornado struck St. Louis, Missouri, and East St. Louis, Illinois.

In 1930, New York's Chrysler Building, at the time the world's tallest building, opened to the public.

In 1941, the British Royal Navy sank the German battleship Bismarck off France, killing over 2,000 German sailors.

In 1942, Doris "Dorie" Miller, a cook aboard the USS West Virginia, became the first African American to receive the Navy Cross for displaying "extraordinary courage and disregard for his own personal safety" during Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

In 1968, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. O'Brien*, upheld the conviction of David O'Brien for destroying his draft card outside a Boston courthouse, ruling that the act was not protected by freedom of speech.

In 1993, a bomb set by the Sicilian mafia exploded outside the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy; 5 people were killed and 48 wounded, and dozens of centuries-old paintings were destroyed or damaged.

In 1994, Nobel Prize-winning author Alexander Solzhenitsyn returned to Russia to the emotional cheers of thousands after spending two decades in exile.

In 1998, Michael Fortier, the government's star witness in the Oklahoma City bombing case, was sentenced to 12 years in prison after apologizing for not warning anyone about the deadly plot. (Fortier was freed in January 2006.)

In 2006, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck the Indonesian island of Java near the city of Yogyakarta, killing more than 5,700 people.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lee Meriwether is 91. Actor Bruce Weitz is 83. Musician Bruce Cockburn is 81. Singer Dee Dee Bridgewater is 76. Football Hall of Famer Jackie Slater is 72. Actor Richard Schiff is 71. Singer Siouxsie Sioux is 69. Comedian Adam Carolla is 62. Actor Todd Bridges is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Jeff Bagwell is 58. Actor Paul Bettany is 55. Actor Jack McBrayer is 53. Rapper-musician Andre 3000 (Outkast) is 51. Rapper Jadakiss is 51. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver is 51. Actor Ben Feldman is 46. Actor-singer Chris Colfer is 36. Actor Lily-Rose Depp is 27. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Jade Carey is 26. Formula One driver Franco Colapinto is 23.