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Thursday, June 4

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu casserole, broccoli, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library, 10 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

2026 Tiger Skills Workouts, 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Arena

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



GBB Open Gym, 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., GHS Gym

BBB Open Gym, 6-8 p.m., Arena

U14 Legion hosts Milbank, 5:30 p.m.

Jr. Legion at Northville, 4:30 p.m.

Postponed: Sr. Legion at Lake Norden, 6 p.m.

U10 Baseball hosts Britton, DH, 5:30 p.m. (W&R)

T-Ball Practice, 6 p.m., Nelson Field

Friday, June 5

Senior Menu: Stuffed pepper soup, ham salad sandwich, fruit, cookie.

U12 Baseball hosts Clark, 4:30 p.m., and Milbank, 7:30 p.m., Falk Field

U10 Baseball hosts Clark, 4:30 p.m., and Milbank, 7:30 p.m., Nelson Field (R&B)

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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.

Ancient Mummy Bread

Scientists studying Ötzi the Iceman, a naturally preserved mummy who died roughly 5,300 years ago, have identified yeast living on and within his remains—and even used it to bake a sourdough loaf. The discovery sheds new light on the microbial communities associated with ancient human remains and could reshape how scientists think about long-term preservation.

Ötzi was found in the Ötztal Alps on the Austria-Italy border by two hikers in 1991. He is one of archaeology's most studied individuals, helping researchers reconstruct Copper Age diets, diseases, and migration patterns. In the new study, scientists identified cold-adapted yeasts in his stomach and on his skin that likely colonized his body shortly after death. One strain was successfully used to ferment and bake sourdough to test whether the ancient yeast was still active. Researchers described the result as "very, very good."

The finding highlights that ancient remains are not static artifacts but complex biological environments, adding another layer to Ötzi's story.

Iran War Rebuke

The US House passed a measure yesterday directing President Donald Trump to end the war with Iran or get approval from Congress. The vote passed 215-208, with four Republicans joining Democrats in the rebuke.

The resolution is symbolic, though a similar measure in the Senate would compel Trump to end the war if passed. The House vote came hours after Kuwaiti authorities blamed Iran for a deadly drone and missile attack on its international airport. One person was killed and at least 63 others were wounded, officials say.

Separately, Israel and Lebanon agreed to a ceasefire conditional on Hezbollah halting its attacks on Israel and retreating above the Litani River. It is unclear if the militant group will abide by the terms; Lebanon has struggled to rein in the Iranian-backed group in the past.

Bakersfield Hostage Situation

The FBI killed a 41-year-old man yesterday who held 10 people hostage at an office building in Bakersfield, California. His death ended a 15-hour standoff with all hostages unharmed.

The incident began at around 1 pm PT Tuesday, when police responded to reports of a bomb threat at a building housing a bank and school district office. A nearby live streamer documented part of the incident, including someone waving from inside the building. At one point, negotiators secured the release of two hostages. The hostage situation ended at 4:20 am PT yesterday with the suspect killed in an officer-involved shooting. Authorities had not publicly revealed a motive as of this writing.

Hostage negotiation is a 52-year-old discipline that began within the New York Police Department and boasts over a 90% success rate. It involves a communication model including active listening and rapport building.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

New York Knicks beat San Antonio Spurs in Game 1 of the NBA Finals, 105-95.

"60 Minutes" correspondent Scott Pelley fired after criticizing incoming executive producer Nick Bilton and CBS News chief Bari Weiss in staff meeting.

Actor Shia LaBeouf pleads guilty to three charges of simple battery for punching bar patrons in New Orleans during Mardi Gras this year.

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Science & Technology

NASA formally ends MAVEN Martian mission after roughly six months without a signal; the orbital probe spent 11 years analyzing Mars' atmosphere.

Bioengineered hookworms, intestinal parasites that have coevolved with humans for thousands of years, used to produce and deliver drugs in a living host.

The cradles of queen bee larvae are made using a chemically distinct type of "royal" wax essential for their development.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -1.2%, Nasdaq -0.1%) as investor hopes over US-Iran deal fade.

AI music startup Suno Inc. raises \$400M at \$5.4B valuation; latest funding round doubles Suno's valuation from seven months ago.

SpaceX reportedly targeting fixed \$135 initial public offering, with a valuation of \$1.8T.

Amazon, Walmart, UnitedHealth Group top Fortune 500 annual list of largest US companies by revenue.

Politics & World Affairs

Vote counting continues in California primary races, with the race for governor too close to call as of this writing; see live updates.

Number of suspected Ebola cases drops to 116 as testing rules out hundreds of cases.

Two scientists are charged with illegally smuggling deactivated mpox virus into the country; authorities did not share why they allegedly did so in court filings.

Justice Department investigates former Rep. George Santos (R, NY-3) over allegations of insider trading on prediction market Kalshi.

★ GROTON ★

TRANSIT

FUNDRAISER



Join us for an evening of great food,
good company, and community support!

 WHEN: Thursday, June 11, 2026	 TIME: 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	 WHERE: Groton Community Center
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 Groton Community Center— 109 N 3rd Street
One block East of Groton Transit

★ LET US DO THE COOKING FOR YOU! ★

 BURGERS	 BRATS	 BEANS	 WATERMELON	 CHIPS
--	--	--	---	--

AND THE FAMOUS MINI DONUTS! 

★ FOOD ★ FUN ★ DOOR PRIZES ★

FREE WILL DONATION

Please join us & Help support Groton Transit!





Chamber welcomes new Rosewood Court owners

Members of the Groton Chamber welcomed the Shilhanek family, the new owners of Rosewood Court, during its monthly meeting Wednesday. Chamber members had the opportunity to meet and congratulate the family as they begin this new chapter. Pictured left to right are President Ashley Bentz, Vice President Douglas Heinrich, Michael Shilhanek, Treasurer Katelyn Nehlich, Secretary April Abeln, Oliver Shilhanek, Regan Shilhanek, Isla Shilhanek and Bruce Babcock. (Courtesy photo April Abeln)

Secretary of State Provides Primary Election Voter Turnout Information

(Pierre, S.D.) – South Dakota's Primary Election was held Tuesday, June 2, 2026. Unofficial results show statewide voter turnout was 34.55%, with 171,729 ballots cast. Official results will be available at the conclusion of the State Canvass on Tuesday, June 9, 2026 in Pierre.

Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson stated: "I would like to thank all of the voters that participated in this primary election. In addition, I would like to thank all of the hard-working auditors and election workers who made it possible for us to have a free, fair, and secure election for all South Dakotans."

Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 16, mile marker 58, six miles west of Rapid City, SD

When: Thursday, May 14, 2026

Vehicle 1: 1996 Toyota Corolla

Driver 1: Leah Renee Thornton, 56-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Passenger 1a: Lyla Dee Henrichsen, 76-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Vehicle 2: Donald Leslie Holmes, 2019 GMC Sierra

Driver 2: 58-year-old male from Newcastle, WY, minor injuries

Seat belt Used: Yes

Pennington County, S.D.- Two Rapid City women died from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle crash Thursday, May 14, 2026, near Rapid City, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Leah Renee Thornton, the driver of a 1996 Toyota Corolla, had entered the intersection on US 16 from Busted Five Court when a westbound 2019 GMC Sierra driven by Donald Leslie Holmes on US 16 collided with the Corolla. The Corolla spun onto the north shoulder, ejecting the passenger, Lyla Dee Henrichsen.

Both the driver and passenger in the Corolla were transported to Monument Health with life-threatening injuries. Neither were wearing seat belts. Henrichsen later died from her injuries. Holmes sustained minor injuries.

Update: Thornton has died from injuries sustained in the crash.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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Celebrate Forever 605 Day on June 5

PIERRE, S.D. – There's only one 605. That's why June 5 (6/05) is Forever 605 Day, the ultimate time for South Dakota to celebrate its only area code with a commitment to keep South Dakota remarkable for everyone who visits or calls it home.

Travel South Dakota's Forever 605 campaign continues to inspire residents and travelers alike to treat The Mount Rushmore State with the care and respect it deserves. On Forever 605 Day, Travel South Dakota invites everyone to appreciate what makes South Dakota so remarkable. The campaign centers on four core pillars, each with meaningful ways to take action:

- Support local businesses
- Explore beyond our well-known landmarks
- Honor culture, immersing in our Indigenous, Old West and Pioneer roots
- Preserve nature and our beautiful outdoors

"Forever 605 Day is a chance for all of us to celebrate to what makes South Dakota special," said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. "We encourage people to venture off the beaten path and explore all corners of the state, leave our parks, trails and great outdoors better than they found them, honor the rich cultures that define this state, and invest in the local businesses that make our communities thrive. Forever 605 isn't just a campaign — it's a promise to future generations."

Take the pledge at Forever605.com to show your commitment —and even earn a sticker while you're at it. Travel South Dakota's passport program is offering double points for each check-in on June 5, a great opportunity to explore and earn extra awards. Share your South Dakota story on social media with #Forever605 and inspire others to experience and protect the 605.

Travel South Dakota's Forever 605 campaign spans a wide range of channels, including video advertising, paid and organic social media, print, out-of-home placements, social media influencer partnerships, web content, and sharing user-generated content.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Travel South Dakota and the South Dakota Arts Council. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.

Northern State University Announces 2026 Gypsy Day Parade Registration Now Open

ABERDEEN, S.D. — Get ready to celebrate as Northern State University announces that registration for the 2026 Gypsy Day Parade is officially open! This year's homecoming theme, "125 Year Anniversary," invites participants to honor Northern's rich history and celebrate a remarkable milestone. The parade will cap off the 2026 Gypsy Days Homecoming Week, set for Monday, Sept. 21 through Sunday, Sept. 27.

The Gypsy Day Parade takes place Saturday, Sept. 26, beginning at 9 a.m. Parade entries are encouraged to draw inspiration from Northern's 125 years of history, tradition and community pride. Participants can sign up their floats and walking groups by visiting northern.edu/gypsy-days.

Prospective participants are encouraged to register early to take advantage of current pricing. A price increase will take effect after Friday, July 31, with the final deadline for all registrations on Monday, Aug. 31.

The Gypsy Day Parade is a highlight of homecoming week, and judges will be on hand to present several awards recognizing outstanding creativity and spirit. Cash prizes will be awarded for the Best Float competition:

1st Place: \$500, two tickets to the President's Suite for a 2026 Wolves football game and the coveted spot number one after the grand entry for the 2027 parade.

2nd Place: \$250 and spot number two after the grand entry for the 2027 parade.

3rd Place: \$100 and spot number three after the grand entry for the 2027 parade.

NSU Student Clubs category: \$500 for the top student organization entry.

Join Northern State University from Sept. 21-27 for a week of spirited celebrations, culminating in the 2026 Gypsy Day Parade!

NSU President's, Dean's and Academic Recognition Lists for Spring 2026

ABERDEEN, S.D. — Northern State University is proud to recognize the outstanding academic achievements of students for the Spring 2026 semester. The university is pleased to announce the students who have earned a place on the President's List, Dean's List, and Academic Recognition List.

The President's List honors full-time undergraduate students who have achieved a perfect 4.00 grade point average (GPA) for the semester. This distinction reflects a Commitment to academic excellence and dedication to their studies.

The Dean's List recognizes full-time undergraduate students who have attained a GPA of 3.50 to 3.99 during the semester. This reflects their dedication and sustained effort in achieving high academic standards.

Part-time undergraduate students earning a place on the Academic Recognition List have achieved a system honor point average of 3.50 or higher for the semester. Eligibility requires completion of at least 12 credit hours prior to the current semester at one or more Regental institutions. This honor demonstrates their sustained commitment to academic success.

Northern State University congratulates these students on their remarkable accomplishments and wishes them continued success in their academic pursuits. Their hard work and dedication exemplify the university's values of excellence and perseverance.

PRESIDENT'S LIST

Jackson Bahr (Langford, S.D.)
Alexandria Cutler (Claremont, S.D.)
Reegan Cvancara (Columbia, S.D.)
Elizabeth Fliehs (Groton, S.D.)
Abigail Hinman (Groton, S.D.)
Audrey Reineke (Westport, S.D.)
Cole Simon (Groton, S.D.)
Bryson Wambach (Groton, S.D.)
Avery West (Langford, S.D.)

DEAN'S LIST

Anna Fjeldheim (Groton, S.D.)
Aspen Johnson (Groton, S.D.)
Ava Kramer (Groton, S.D.)
Lydia Meier (Groton, S.D.)
Cali Vandervorst (Claremont, S.D.)
Laney Widener (Langford, S.D.)
Caleb Willis (Westport, S.D.)

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION LIST

Bradley Jung (Warner, S.D.)
Katelyn Mehlhaff (Westport, S.D.)

SDDOT Reminds Public about Mowing Regulations for State Right of Way

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) reminds landowners of mowing regulations for the state right of way. Administrative Rule 70:04:06:06 states: Start of mowing - no mowing of the right of way may begin in the west river counties of Dewey, Jones, Stanley, Gregory, Lyman, or Tripp before June 15 and east of the Missouri River before July 10. All mowing by permit must be completed by September 1 each year, unless an extension is granted in writing by the Department.

In accordance with the administrative rule, abutting landowners on state highways are given preference to mow right of way ditches. Other persons wishing to mow must obtain a waiver from the abutting landowner.

Any person wanting to mow Interstate right of way ditches must apply for a permit, with preference being given to abutting landowners. Other persons wishing to mow must also obtain a waiver from the abutting landowner.

The application and permits needed for mowing the right of way for Interstate, state-owned railroad right of way, and the abutting landowner waiver are located on the SDDOT website at <https://dot.sd.gov/inside-sddot/forms-publications/forms>.

SDDOT may mow medians and areas within the rights of way prior to June 15 to control noxious weeds and provide increased safety to the traveling public.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Lower turnout, shifting loyalties may drive results in GOP primary runoff for South Dakota governor

Doeden, Rhoden will need support from backers of losing candidates, elections analysts say

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Doeden, a vehicle dealership and rental property owner from Aberdeen, led primary results with 31% of the votes, according to unofficial election results on the Secretary of State's website. He was followed by Rhoden at 25%.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and state House of Representatives Speaker Jon Hansen earned 23% and 21%, respectively. South Dakota's Republican primary is closed to independents and voters registered with other parties.

Doeden's lead was unsurprising for Julia Hellwege, the director of the Chiesman Center for Democracy and a University of South Dakota associate professor in political science.

The Chiesman Center and South Dakota News Watch polled voters several times ahead of the primary, as did KELO-TV and Emerson College. While Johnson took an early lead, Hellwege said, voter preferences gradually shifted toward Doeden amid a "fairly anti-government sentiment" among likely South Dakota voters.

Michael Card, professor emeritus of political science at USD, said he believed it would "be Dusty all the way" until the final days leading up to the election. By then, Card said it was easier to predict Johnson's "fall from grace with voters" and their displeasure with negative advertisements attributed to his campaign.

The dust from Tuesday's primary election has barely settled, but two of South Dakota's governor hopefuls are back in a full sprint toward a July 28 special election — the first runoff in state history for a party's gubernatorial nomination.

Advanced voting for the Republican runoff begins June 12, and ballots must be printed listing current Gov. Larry Rhoden and political newcomer Toby Doeden by June 10. Voter registration is open through July 13.

Political experts are still digesting Tuesday's results and weighing factors that could shape the runoff — chiefly the potential for lower turnout and which of the finalists will draw support from backers of the two eliminated candidates.

Political analyst Drey Samuelson worked for South Dakota's last two Democratic federal officeholders, former U.S. Sens. Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson.

Samuelson said he was also shocked that Johnson didn't make the runoff, calling the congressman "the victim of the anti-incumbent spirit sweeping the country."

Rhoden likely edged past Johnson by running on his gubernatorial record, Hellwege said, while Johnson struggled to shed the image of a "D.C. outsider" after serving in the U.S. House of Representatives for nearly eight years.

Primaries also tend to draw more partisan voters than moderate ones, Hellwege said.

A political action committee affiliated with Doeden sent a text message to Republican voters saying "if you hate President Trump and all that he stands for, Dusty Johnson is the candidate for you." Trump's support in the Republican Party remains strong even as his approval ratings have fallen more broadly in recent months. Johnson voted to certify the results of the 2020 election, which Trump lost, and supported

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the creation of an independent, bipartisan commission to investigate the rioters who attempted to stop the certification of that election.

"Doeden voters were always going to be the motivated voters, and those were always going to be the ones to turn out," Hellwege said.

Turnout, whims of Johnson and Hansen voters a factor

About 43% of registered Republican voters cast their ballots Tuesday. That's comparable to 42% in the 2018 gubernatorial primary and 43% in 2022.

Turnout for July's special election will be lower, Hellwege predicted, which could skew results toward more partisan voters since they're more motivated to participate than moderates.

"Motivation attrition is going to be greater. Special elections always have lower turnout," she said.

Doeden finished with the most votes, but nearly 70% of Republican voters chose another candidate.

Doeden's statements about wanting to "put an end to Dusty's career" are likely to have largely alienated that base, Card said. If Johnson's voters return for the runoff, they'll likely shift toward Rhoden, Hellwege agreed.

"All of those Johnson voters now have a choice: Are they going to turn out? I think it's going to be a question for those voters of whether they're sufficiently motivated by not wanting Doeden to win," Hellwege said.

Hansen voters could "move either way," Hellwege said.

It'll come down to whether or not they are driven out to vote, Card said, and it's going to be "easier for Rhoden than Doeden" to ultimately secure enough votes to win over the majority of voters in the runoff.

Neither Hansen nor Johnson responded to Searchlight's request for comment. Neither had endorsed Rhoden or Doeden as of Wednesday afternoon.

Influence of money, direction of messaging

Beyond voter shifts, Hellwege said Johnson's and Hansen's campaigns could influence the race by directing money toward their preferred candidate.

"That question is whether the Dusty camp is going to move their money toward Rhoden or if they're going to save their money for the next race or future potential candidacy," Hellwege said.

Johnson had \$931,000 on hand two weeks before the election, according to his pre-primary campaign disclosure. Doeden had less than \$220,000, having loaned his campaign \$4 million. Rhoden ended the pre-primary reporting period with \$169,616 but reported raising significant additional funds after the deadline.

"We outperformed the other three candidates very dramatically in the closing weeks of the last campaign," Rhoden said. "So I think that we'll be in fine shape to be able to present our message and move forward through this interim campaign."

Rhoden said the one-on-one format lets him focus on his vision and offer a "clear contrast" between him and Doeden.

Doeden did not respond to a request for comment. In a speech to attendees at his Tuesday night watch party, he said the success broke institutional expectations.

"They said no outsider in South Dakota can break through three career, 20-year politicians," Doeden said. "Well, guess what? You and I, we are doing it."

Tuesday marked the first time a primary for a South Dakota party's nomination for governor has gone to a runoff since a law requiring one was passed in 1985. Previously, when no candidate reached 35% in a crowded field, party delegates chose the nominee at a state convention.

The candidate who ultimately wins the Republican nomination for governor will advance to the Nov. 3 general election to face Dan Ahlers, who was uncontested for the Democratic nomination.

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

COMMENTARY

Votes that cost Johnson in the primary will stand up well to the scrutiny of history

by Kevin Woster

It wasn't just the ads, of course, but they sure didn't help.

Dusty Johnson had plenty of money to spend on campaign advertisements. And he spent it freely throughout his run for the Republican nomination for governor. But they didn't work for me. And obviously they didn't work for a lot of GOP primary voters.

Which is strange, because Johnson is a solid public speaker and experienced retail politician — energetic, articulate and engaging. But the scripts and settings for most of his campaign ads seemed contrived, sometimes putting Johnson in unconvincing positions such as pretending to help with farm and ranch work.

His smiles on camera seemed almost painful. And he appeared stiff and uncomfortable on the screen, like a high-school freshman trying out for a part in a school play that was just a little too much for him.

In reality, the governor's job would not have been too much for Johnson at all. As a former chief of staff to then-Gov. Dennis Daugaard, a twice-elected state public utilities commissioner and a four-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Johnson went into the primary campaign with plenty of experience to be governor.

He just couldn't convince voters that he was the right man for the job.

By "voters," I don't mean a cross section of South Dakotans. I mean a subset of Republicans, those voting in the primary election, where the most fervent of the MAGA crowd are sure to show up.

And being a real MAGA man has been a difficult role for Johnson. He tries to talk the MAGA talk and walk the MAGA walk, but he's still at his core an old-school South Dakota Republican, generally polite in his rhetoric and reasonable in his conservatism.

A guy willing, from time to time, to cast a vote consistent with personal values, even if it conflicts with political expediency.

Can a guy like that still win a Republican primary in our state? Good question.

First place at 31% went to Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden, a Donald Trump wannabe who has some of the president's political swagger and appeal to voters who want to smash the establishment. Doeden wants to slash state government spending and eliminate property taxes, although he hasn't clearly explained how to do it or how to maintain essential services.

Doeden has already spent more than \$4 million of his personal wealth and is geared up to spend more. Because he didn't get the 35% needed to avoid a runoff, he will face Gov. Larry Rhoden, who finished second with 25%. Johnson got 23%, a demoralizing finish for a guy considered the front-runner for much of the race. And state Speaker of the House Jon Hansen got fourth with 21% — quite respectable for an underfunded candidate.

Rhoden ran on an admirable body of work compiled since January of 2025, when he moved up from lieutenant governor after former Gov. Kristi Noem joined the Trump administration. More limited in funds than either Johnson or Doeden, Rhoden spent wisely on campaign ads that were as genuine as Johnson's were awkward.

Beyond advertising, Johnson faced some stiff headwinds in a primary heavily influenced by "drain-the-swamp" voters. Congress in general has a miserable approval rating, which Johnson couldn't escape entirely. And his commendable work as a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus in the House might sell well in a general election, but many MAGA voters seem to prefer troublemakers to problem-solvers.

Having four candidates competing for a reduced number of voters in a primary was a further complication. And some of Johnson's votes of conscience during his first few years in the House were used against him in campaign attack ads.

A Rhoden ad pointed out Johnson's vote in 2019 against an emergency funding declaration by Trump to fund border-wall construction. Acting out of legitimate concern for the separation of powers, Johnson was

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one of just 13 Republicans in the House to vote against the presidential overreach.

Johnson said at the time his vote was consistent with conservative principles and with his oath to the Constitution. But that vote followed him through the years. So did his vote in 2021 to form an independent commission to investigate the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol (he later voted against creating the Democratic-led House Select Committee that ultimately conducted the investigation).

Johnson sought to strengthen his MAGA standing in recent years. But those past votes wouldn't go away. Rhoden used one ad that called the Jan. 6 committee a "witch hunt" against Trump, concluding with: "Dusty Johnson. If he's not with Trump, he's not with us."

That's effective messaging in the GOP primary these days. But the votes themselves will likely stand up well to the scrutiny of history, as will Johnson's overall service in Congress.

Maybe that's some consolation as he finishes the last seven months of his U.S. House term and begins to consider what might come next in life.

Kevin Woster grew up on a farm near Reliance and worked for decades as a journalist, including stops at the Brookings Register, Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Rapid City Journal, KELO-TV and South Dakota Public Broadcasting, plus freelance assignments for outdoors and agricultural magazines. He lives in Rapid City.

Turnout for South Dakota primary election rises to 34.55%

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

Voter turnout for Tuesday's South Dakota primary election was 34.55%, according to the Secretary of State's Office.

It was the strongest turnout for a primary election in the state since 2008.

There were 171,729 ballots cast for Tuesday's election, and 497,046 voters registered.

Turnout among Republicans was 43%. The Republican Party, whose primary races are open only to Republican voters, chose its nominees for governor, U.S. Senate and U.S. House, and had 49 legislative primaries spread across the state.

Democrats had mostly local races on their ballots, with no statewide primary races and one legislative primary. Democratic turnout was 17%. Turnout among other voters, including those from minor parties, independents and those not listing an affiliation on their registration, was 19%.

This was the first election under a new state law that requires local elections to be combined with either the June primary or November general election. State lawmakers who approved the law said they were motivated in part by a desire to increase turnout.

Many state legislative races pending, several in line for recount as former lawmakers seek return

Some victors in 2024 shake-up fend off former competitors, others fall

BY: JOHN HULT

The makeup of the Legislature was up in the air as of 1:00 the morning after South Dakota's primary election.

Ten Republican state lawmakers ousted in 2024 are angling to get their seats back in 2026. Results were mixed for the nine who had primaries on Tuesday, with results still coming in for several races and others set for possible recounts.

Shawn Bordeaux of Rosebud won the state's only Democratic primary, beating Troy "Luke" Lunderman for a chance to return to the state Senate.

Bordeaux will face Chamberlain Republican Rebecca Reimer in November's general election. Reimer, who was term-limited in the state House of Representatives, beat Lower Brule Sen. Tamara Grove in Tuesday's

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primary.

In Watertown's District 5, Rep. Josephine Garcia fell in a state Senate primary to incumbent Sen. Glen Vilhauer. Garcia beat Byron Callies in the 2024 primary to earn her seat in the House of Representatives, but opted to challenge Vilhauer for his Senate seat instead of seeking reelection to the House.

Callies, Vilhauer and Garcia are all from Watertown.

Vilhauer won with 59% of the vote. His was one of the first state legislative victories of the night reported on the Secretary of State's website.

Vilhauer won handily, but he said he wasn't necessarily expecting to as polls opened on Tuesday.

"I knew it was going to be a battle going in," Vilhauer said. "She worked hard on her side, and I didn't know what to expect."

Callies was among the first to call Vilhauer to congratulate him, around 9:30 p.m.

"I'm happy, because Glen's a solid legislator," said Callies, who's angling to win his seat back in the general election.

Garcia did not return a call seeking comment.

In District 21, Sen. Mykala Voita of Bonesteel beat former Sen. Erin Tobin of Winner in a rematch of their 2024 contest, which Voita won by a few dozen votes that year. This time around, Voita bested Tobin by 1,002 votes.

In response to a request for comment, Voita sent a text reading "Glory to God!"

Tobin did not return a call from South Dakota Searchlight about her race after it was called, but said earlier in the evening she would be "at peace" with the results regardless of what they might be.

Another rematch saw Yanktonites Lauren Nelson and Jean Hunhoff battling for District 18's state Senate seat. Nelson was a newcomer in 2024 when she beat Hunhoff, who'd spent decades in the Capitol between stints in the House and Senate. On Tuesday, Nelson held off Hunhoff, winning by 243 votes.

Other notable races

District 4 Rep. Dylan Jordan of Clear Lake, first elected in 2024, finished fourth in a five-way race. As of 1 a.m. Wednesday, he trailed Ryan Kohl of Milbank and former Rep. Fred Deutsch of Florence, in first and second place, respectively. A recount is possible in that race, with 59 votes separating the top two vote-getters while Rep. Kent Roe, of Hayti, came in third place, with 72 fewer votes than Deutsch.

District 4 has two possible recounts. In the other, Bryant's Stephanie Sauder beat Clear Lake's Tim Begalka by 105 votes in the unofficial tally from the Secretary of State.

District 1 Rep. Logan Manhart of Aberdeen, elected in the 2024 primary, fell to Rep. Nick Fosness, a hospital administrator appointed by Gov. Larry Rhoden in 2025, and newcomer Daniel Kjos.

Another recount was possible as of Wednesday at 1 a.m., in the District 16 race for House of Representatives. Rep. John Shubeck of Beresford trailed Lisa Bogue of Beresford by 245 votes in unofficial results. Jason VanDenTop of Canton was in third place, trailing Shubeck by 68 votes.

Vote totals incomplete

Sen. John Carley of Piedmont, who won his first term in 2024, trailed William Meirose of Sturgis by 166 votes as of 1 a.m. Wednesday.

Former Rep. Tyler Tordsen led Rep. Tony Kayser by two votes in the District 14 primary, with results still coming in. The Sioux Falls men are vying for second place and a spot on the November general election ballot alongside Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt of Sioux Falls, who led by more than 600 votes early Wednesday.

District 28 Sen. Sam Marty of Prairie City was in a close race with former legislator Ryan Maher of Isabel.

Former Rep. Gary Cammack of Union Center, who lost his seat in 2024, and Gary Deering of Hereford, led Reps. Terri Jorgenson of Piedmont and Kathy Rice of Blackhawk in the District 29 race.

In District 30, Hot Springs Sen. Amber Hulse led former Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller of Rapid City by more than 1,300 votes.

Former Sen. David Johnson of Rapid City led Sen. Curt Voight of Rapid City in a rematch of their 2024 race for District 33 Senate in early results.

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Rep. Heather Baxter of Rapid City has signaled her intention to challenge sitting Secretary of State Monae Johnson for the Republican nomination to that constitutional office at the state's Republican Party convention this summer. In early results, Baxter trailed former Rapid City Rep. Becky Drury and Rep. Mike Derby in the District 34 primary.

Early results in the District 35 primary put Sen. Greg Blanc, elected in 2024, in a close race with fellow Rapid City resident Nicole Mitzel.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Treasury's Bessent mum on Trump's IRS immunity deal

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The day after acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said the Trump administration's "anti-weaponization" fund was dead, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent evaded questions on Capitol Hill Wednesday about whether President Donald Trump, his family and the Trump Organization would be absolved from future tax enforcement, another part of the president's IRS settlement.

During a budget oversight hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, Bessent repeatedly cited "ongoing litigation" to sidestep lawmakers' inquiries into the settlement details the administration negotiated to voluntarily drop Trump's multibillion-dollar lawsuit against the IRS for the 2019 leak of his tax returns.

Committee Chair Mike Crapo said he wanted to give Bessent a chance to "set the record straight, understanding there is ongoing litigation."

"What can you share with us about Treasury and the IRS role in the settlement agreement, specifically since IRS CEO Frank Bisignano signed the settlement agreement?" Crapo of Idaho asked.

Bessent responded that Treasury was represented in the case by the Department of Justice and so "any additional questions about the settlement or the fund should be addressed to the Justice Department and acting Attorney General Todd Blanche."

Sen. Ron Wyden, the committee's top Democrat, said during opening remarks that Bessent "owes the committee an explanation of what the Treasury knows about the dirty settlement."

"That's because his department was involved from beginning to end," the Oregon senator added. "Treasury was a defendant and a negotiator in the lawsuit."

Moments later, Wyden asked, "Does the IRS audit immunity given to Trump, his family, and his businesses still stand? I'd like a yes-or-no answer to that. I got five minutes, I'm gonna use them for these questions, okay, so that we understand what's at stake here. This immunity deal is the biggest scam against the taxpayer in American history."

Bessent responded: "As Albert Einstein said, that doing the same thing, expecting a different answer is the definition of insanity."

"You've given no answers on this subject, and that's why I'm going to ask these questions," Wyden said.

"Because, as I said, there's ongoing litigation," Bessent replied.

Fund fails to launch

Trump, his sons Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, as well as the Trump Organization sued the IRS and the Department of Treasury for \$10 billion in damages for leaking his tax returns to news outlets. The contractor responsible for the leak was sentenced in early 2024.

On May 18, the Department of Justice announced the creation of a nearly \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund for "victims of lawfare."

Under intense worry, even from Republicans, that Jan. 6 defendants who assaulted police could receive reparations, Blanche told lawmakers Tuesday that the DOJ would "not be moving forward with the fund."

The creation of the fund had mired Senate Republicans' path to approving a bill that would fund immi-

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gration enforcement for multiple years. Trump had wanted the bill on his desk by June 1.

'FOREVER BARRED'

But lawmakers are still searching for a clear answer on the department's May 19 settlement addendum declaring "The United States RELEASES, WAIVES, ACQUITS, and FOREVER DISCHARGES each of the Plaintiffs from, and is hereby FOREVER BARRED and PRECLUDED from prosecuting or pursuing, any and all claims, counterclaims, causes of action, appeals or requests for relief ... including tax returns filed before the Effective Date."

Senate Democrats and legal advocates representing multiple plaintiffs in lawsuits challenging the settlement criticized the arrangement Tuesday.

The Department of Justice did respond to a request for comment, and the White House referred States Newsroom to the DOJ and the Trump Organization.

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

Congress weighs cuts to states' already 'insufficient' election security dollars

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

Ahead of the November midterm elections, President Donald Trump and his Republican allies have demanded Congress pass sweeping voting restrictions, including showing proof of citizenship to register — all in the name of election security.

At the same time, the only federal agency dedicated solely to helping states and localities run smooth and secure elections operates on a meager budget. It provides grants for election security far smaller than in the past. And U.S. House Republicans have signaled they want sizable further cuts.

The agency, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, sits at the center of a fight playing out in Congress over how to best ensure secure elections. The debate has thrown into sharp relief a yawning gap between GOP rhetoric over election tampering and actual congressional support for election security efforts.

"If my colleagues truly cared about protecting our elections from foreign interference, they'd put the resources behind it," Rep. Sanford Bishop, a Georgia Democrat, said at a House Appropriations Committee meeting this spring. "Instead, we get empty rhetoric, zero urgency, while putting the right of citizens to vote at risk."

Congressional support of the EAC's election security grant program has fluctuated over time, but has generally trended downward.

Lawmakers approved \$380 million in 2018 and \$425 million in 2020, along with an additional \$400 million in election-related pandemic aid that year.

Since then, grant funding has slowed to a trickle. Congress appropriated \$75 million in 2022 and again in 2023. That was followed by \$55 million in 2024 and \$15 million in 2025.

This year's amount, \$45 million, is an increase from the previous year — consistent with enhanced needs in an election year — but substantially lower than other recent years and a far cry from the program's early years.

Trump and many GOP lawmakers support the SAVE America Act, which would impose new restrictions on voting. It would require voters to show a photo ID at the polls, as well as require them to bring documents proving their citizenship, such as a passport or birth certificate, with them when they register to vote.

The requirements are needed, the bill's supporters say, to combat noncitizen voting, an extremely rare occurrence.

"The cheating is rampant in our elections," Trump asserted without evidence in his 2026 State of the Union address. He has called the SAVE America Act "commonsense, country-saving legislation."

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The House passed the bill in February but it has floundered in the Senate amid opposition from Democrats and a handful of Republicans. Trump continues to seek new avenues to advance the measure, including urging lawmakers to attach it to housing legislation.

Cuts to election security agency

The Trump-led push for voting restrictions has largely ignored concrete election security needs in favor of chasing the phantom specter of noncitizen voting, Democrats and experts on election administration say. The result, they say, has been the possibility of sharp cuts at the EAC.

The House Appropriations Committee in April approved a bill that would cut the EAC's salaries and expenses from \$23.86 million to \$17 million. It would mark the first time in four years the agency's budget has dropped below \$20 million.

The bill would also sharply cut the EAC's election security grant program from \$45 million to \$15 million, the same as the last non-election year.

Since 2018, the agency has distributed the grants to election officials for technology upgrades, including cybersecurity, physical security improvements at election sites and efforts to combat voter misinformation. Lawmakers created the election security grants in response to foreign interference in the 2016 election.

"Republicans claim falsely that our elections are plagued by fraud and that more needs to be done to secure the vote," Rep. Steny Hoyer, a Maryland Democrat, said in a statement to States Newsroom.

"Yet, they have consistently undermined the security of our elections, including by proposing to cut election-security grants by two-thirds and the Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) overall budget by almost 30% in Fiscal Year 2027," Hoyer said. "This will leave states without critical resources to secure their voting systems and adopt the latest in voting technology and best practices."

Hoyer, who helped spearhead the 2002 legislation creating the EAC and is the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the agency's budget, said it has been a tremendous benefit to state and local election officials and to the integrity of the vote.

"I will continue to oppose Republican efforts to cut its funding," he said.

Congressional GOP embraces Trump

The bill represents only one, early step in the appropriations process. The House hasn't voted on it and the Senate could eliminate or alter the cuts, with any differences eventually worked out in a conference committee.

The House Appropriations Committee, which is not burdened with the Senate's need for bipartisan approval of most legislation, in past years has also put forward cuts to election security grant funding that have been abandoned later.

Still, the measure this year demonstrates how House Republicans have embraced Trump's focus on noncitizen voting.

While cutting the EAC and election security funding, the bill includes a provision prohibiting the use of funds to register noncitizens to vote. Noncitizens are already prohibited from voting in federal elections and only a very small number of municipalities allow noncitizens to vote in local contests.

"The people demanded a new mandate, we're carrying it forward. That includes reinforcing President Trump's work to ... ensure that only citizens vote in our elections," Rep. Tom Cole, an Oklahoma Republican and the Appropriations Committee chairman, said at an April meeting.

A spokesperson for Rep. Dave Joyce, an Ohio Republican who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee that developed the bill, didn't respond to a request for comment.

Funding ebb

Congress created the EAC in the 2002 Help America Vote Act, passed in the wake of the 2000 presidential election and the Florida recount.

A bipartisan commission leads the agency, which has about 70 employees, according to its 2025 annual

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report. It focuses on aiding state and local election officials with training and other resources, certifying voting equipment and overseeing grant programs.

Gideon Cohn-Postar, director of federal affairs at the Institute for Responsive Government, said election officials generally want Congress to provide about \$400 million a year, a figure that reflects lawmakers' initial commitment to the grant program in 2018 and would allow states to make significant strides in bolstering their election infrastructure.

Each year's grants are split between states and territories based on a formula. In practice, most receive the minimum amount. The \$45 million grant for 2026 translated into \$819,000 for most states, with a mandatory 20% match.

"It's absolutely insufficient," Cohn-Postar said.

State spending

A December 2024 report from the Bipartisan Policy Center measuring the impact of the grant program found that cybersecurity constituted the single largest category of grant spending, at over \$200 million, followed by nearly \$150 million on voting equipment.

Some states save up their grant money over several years to help pay for larger purchases, like voter registration systems, with the money earning interest in the meantime. As of March 2025, states had collectively spent 69% of their grant dollars, according to the latest data available from the EAC.

Two states — Nevada and Ohio — have spent 100% of their funds. Only Louisiana has spent none, ahead of a future elections system overhaul.

In Connecticut, election officials have spent 95% of the \$13.8 million it has received in election security grants over the years, according to the EAC data. The funds have helped towns conduct security audits, Connecticut Democratic Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas said in an interview.

As an example, Thomas said when she took office in 2023 not all of the town's systems were on a government online domain but most have now adopted one.

"Something like that, it never gets the headlines but hugely important from a security perspective," Thomas said.

Commission warns against cuts

EAC commissioners have been warning Congress that unstable funding and budget cuts would harm their agency's work. All three current commissioners and a recent former commissioner testified at a House Administration Committee hearing on election security in May, where they cautioned lawmakers against reduced and unpredictable resources.

Commissioner Benjamin Hovland, a Democratic appointee of Trump, noted that while Congress has provided "significant" funding since the 2002 law, federal dollars have covered less than 5% of the total cost of running elections during that time.

Election officials today face challenges that would have been unimaginable when the law was passed, he said, adding that commissioners heard enthusiasm for the EAC's work in recent meetings with officials.

"But the agency is nearing a point where funding cuts will impact what we can accomplish, and the support we can provide election officials, especially related to election security," Hovland said.

States frequently tell the EAC they want federal funding that is "predictable, consistent, and sufficient" to support long-term planning, said Christy McCormick, a Republican commissioner appointed by President Barack Obama.

The EAC's adoption of newer, more rigorous standards for election equipment illustrates the importance of funding for state and local election officials.

In 2021, the EAC adopted the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines 2.0, or VVSG 2.0, replacing the earlier 1.0 guidelines. The technical standards are designed to enhance security, such as requiring air gapped systems, and greater accessibility for voters with disabilities.

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While states are not required to use VVSG-certified machines, many states have followed the EAC's lead and mandated the use of machines that meet these standards. Upgrading is expensive, however.

In the meantime, election technology continues to age. By 2028, the average age of modern voting equipment will rise to 9.3 years old, up from just 4.9 years old in 2020, according to a report from the Bipartisan Policy Center released in late May. The report identified "episodic and unpredictable" federal funding as one obstacle to states purchasing VVSG 2.0 equipment.

"Federal support is absolutely key to making sure that election infrastructure is functioning well at the state and local levels," Will Adler, a co-author of the report, said in an interview.

'Don't give me any more money'

To be sure, some state election officials are skeptical of accepting grant funding. Kansas Republican Secretary of State Scott Schwab told a congressional hearing in April that elections are best run and funded locally.

He said he previously accepted grant dollars but that state lawmakers then didn't approve the required matching funds, leaving his office in a bind.

"I would rather, because of the strings attached, just don't give me any more money," Schwab said. "If we need more money, we can handle it locally."

But since the House Appropriations Committee advanced cuts to the EAC and the election security grants in April, numerous election officials and voting rights groups have urged lawmakers to reconsider.

On May 12, the Project for Election Infrastructure sent a letter signed by several dozen local election officials asking senators for \$400 million in election security grants, with at least two-thirds directed to localities. The true cost of modernizing and fully securing American election systems will run billions of dollars, the letter warned.

The National Association of Counties on June 2 asked House and Senate appropriations leaders to not cut funding. The years between presidential elections are when "critical groundwork is laid," the association's CEO and executive director, Matt Chase, wrote in a letter.

Chase ticked through typical security expenses that can quickly add up. Bollards to protect remote drop boxes can cost \$500 to \$4,000 per bollard. Key card access at election facilities can cost \$1,500 to \$5,000 per door. Video surveillance cameras can run hundreds to thousands of dollars.

"Federal investment scaled only to presidential cycles leaves counties without the resources needed to be ready when turnout surges," Chase wrote.

Thomas, the Connecticut secretary of state, echoed the sentiment.

"I feel that many people use the term election security almost like a slogan," Thomas said. "But election security is actually year-round work."

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

US Senate panel pans DHS plan to stop customs processing at blue-city airports

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin appeared before the U.S. Senate Appropriations Homeland Security panel Tuesday and defended his threats to cripple international air travel into some cities led by Democrats.

Democratic senators on the panel also pressed Mullin about aggressive immigration tactics from federal officers; whether the department would follow court orders from federal judges; and his recent televised comments floating plans to pull customs employees from airports in cities that don't cooperate with federal

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immigration enforcement.

Republicans also probed Mullin about visa issues affecting rural hospitals and employers in the hospital-ity industry.

It was the first time Mullin, who was advocating for President Donald Trump's fiscal 2027 budget request, has appeared before Congress since the Senate confirmed his nomination to lead the Department of Homeland Security in March.

The top Democrat on the panel, Chris Murphy of Connecticut, asked Mullin if DHS would implement court orders from federal judges.

Mullin did not answer the question, but said he would "never break the Constitution."

Murphy pressed him several more times, but Mullin only argued that some judges make a "political opinion from the bench."

"If we didn't think the courts were politicized then I'd be able to answer that," he said.

Airspace in 'chaos'?

Murphy criticized Mullin's first few months in his role, citing repeated statements he would suspend arrivals of international flights to cities and states that are governed by Democrats.

"Not only would that throw our airspace into chaos, it's illegal," Murphy said. "Do not ask us to fund an agency that makes up its own laws."

Mullin pushed back on Murphy's characterizations, calling them "outlandish claims" that "are flat wrong."

"What's unconstitutional that we're doing?" Mullin said. "We're doing the job that Congress gave us."

Mullin said in interviews on Fox News and Newsmax last week that he was considering a plan to remove customs officers from airports in cities that do not cooperate with federal immigration enforcement.

"Listen, these sanctuary cities where the local radical left Democrats aren't allowing us to do our job and enforce federal laws, then we shouldn't be processing international flights into their cities, either," he told Fox's Sean Hannity May 26.

The move would severely harm customs processing.

The top Democrat on the full Appropriations Committee, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, said it would be "insane."

"It is not only dangerous but would spell economic crisis for blue and red states," Murray said.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia

Maryland Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen brought up the high-profile case of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, the Salvadoran immigrant who was wrongly deported to a brutal mega-prison in El Salvador last year. Abrego Garcia fought to be returned to the United States, where the Trump administration continues to try to deport him.

Van Hollen asked Mullin if he was aware that Abrego Garcia has agreed to be removed to Costa Rica, and that Costa Rica will accept him.

Mullin said he was not aware of that.

In a federal court in Maryland, Abrego Garcia is challenging the Trump administration's efforts to remove him to several African countries, rejecting his offer of moving to Costa Rica.

Abrego Garcia's wrongful deportation cast a national spotlight on the Trump administration's aggressive deportation campaign. Several courts ruled his deportation illegal and the Supreme Court ruled Abrego Garcia should be returned to the U.S., but stopped short of requiring it.

The Justice Department indicted Abrego Garcia on human-smuggling charges stemming from a 2022 traffic stop, but a federal judge in Tennessee last month found the move to be vindictive and dismissed the charges.

Prior to the charges being dismissed, the Justice Department offered for Abrego Garcia to be removed to Costa Rica if he were to plead guilty to those initial charges. He refused. Since then, the Trump admin-

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istration has tried to remove him to Eswatini, Liberia and Uganda.

Van Hollen told Mullin that Abrego Garcia had agreed to be deported to Costa Rica.

"Great. If he's willing to do that, we'll send him," Mullin said.

Visa restrictions

Appropriations Committee Chair Susan Collins of Maine asked Mullin about two visa programs, H-1B for high-skill workers and H-2B for seasonal workers. She said the newly imposed visa fee for highly skilled workers the Trump administration placed – \$100,000 – is impacting rural hospitals in her state.

She asked Mullin if the Trump administration would consider making a carveout for healthcare workers on a H-1B visa.

Mullin said DHS has looked into that issue, but said his ability to address it was limited.

"To have a carveout would be difficult," he said. "We still have to do our due diligence."

Collins asked Mullin if DHS would consider reinstating a visa policy that allowed repeat seasonal workers to not be included in the annual cap for H-2B visas.

Mullin said his hands were tied and said Congress would have to give him a higher cap.

New Hampshire Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen asked Mullin for a followup on visa processing for international students on F-1 visas, citing her state's New England College as an example.

"Without approval by July 1 they will lose 2,000 graduate students," she said.

Mullin said he had looked into the issue and alerted U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency that processes legal immigration paperwork. DHS is "working on it," he added.

"There's some real urgency," Shaheen said.

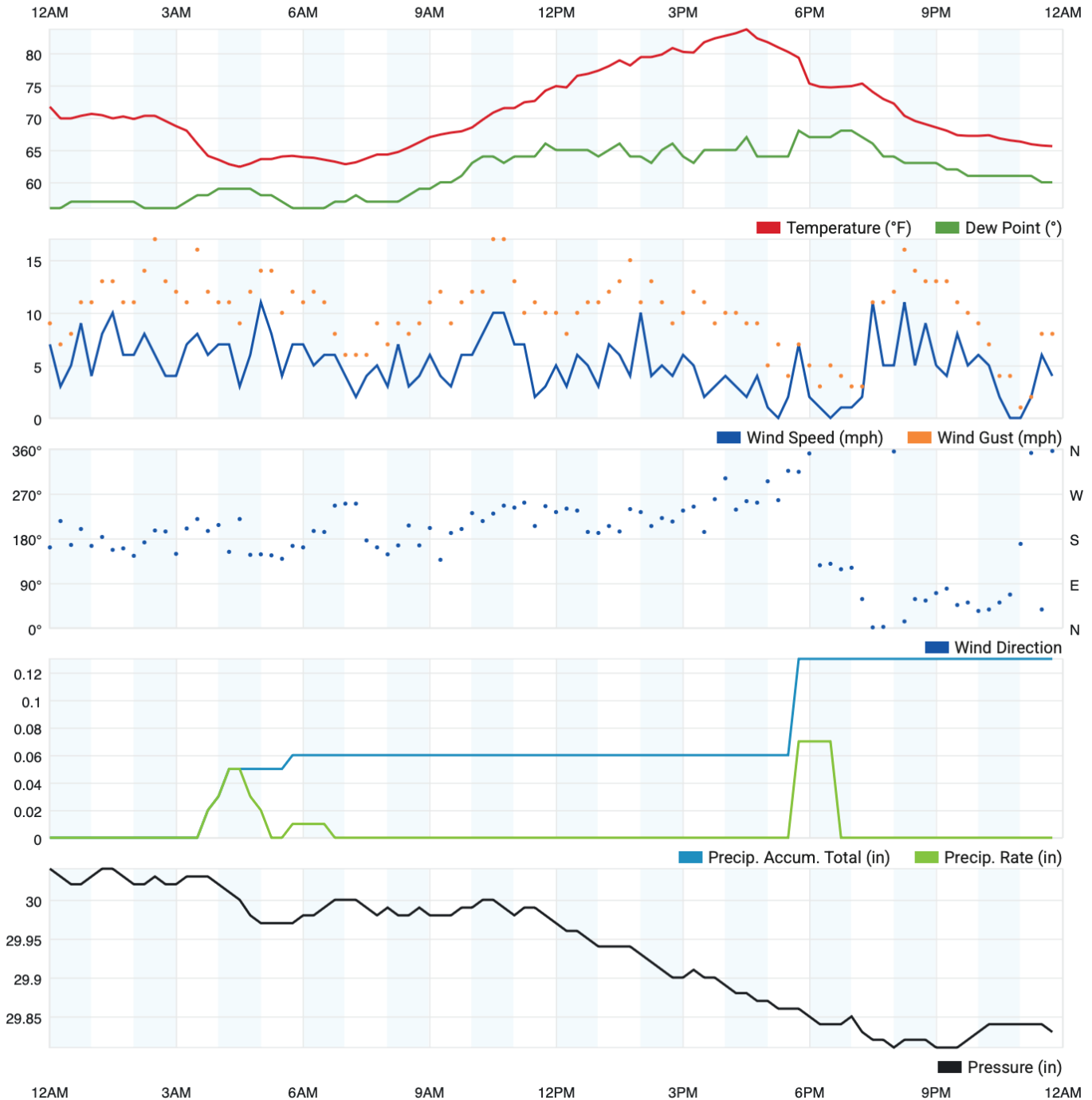
Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

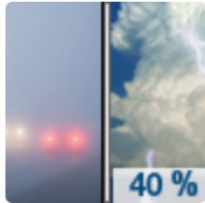
June 3, 2026



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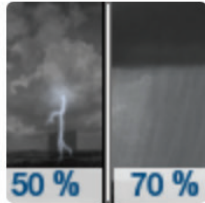
Today



High: 80 °F

Patchy Fog
then Chance
T-storms

Tonight



Low: 55 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Showers
Likely

Friday



High: 81 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

Friday Night



Low: 54 °F

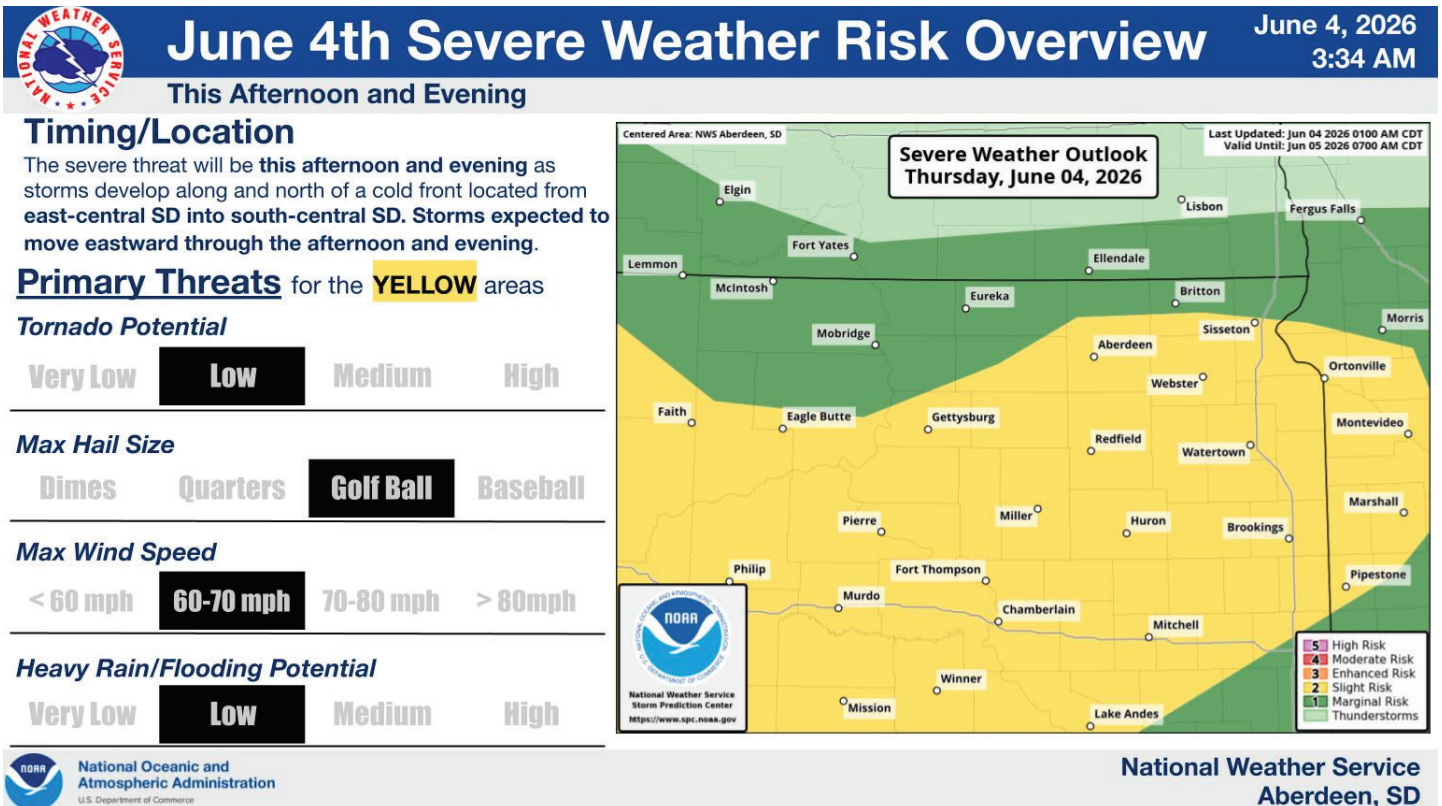
Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 89 °F

Sunny



A Slight (level 2 out of 5) risk for severe storms remains in place over portions of central and northeast SD into western MN this afternoon and evening. The main threats will be large hail 1-2" in diameter and wind gusts of 60-70 mph. There is also a chance for an isolated tornado or two from around Conde and Verdon south and west to Miller and Murdo. Flooding is possible in areas that have received large amounts of rain recently or if storms continue over the same area for several hours. A Marginal (level 1 out of 5) covers parts of north central SD into far northeast SD and west central MN with hazards of hail up to 1" in diameter and wind gusts of 60-70 mph.

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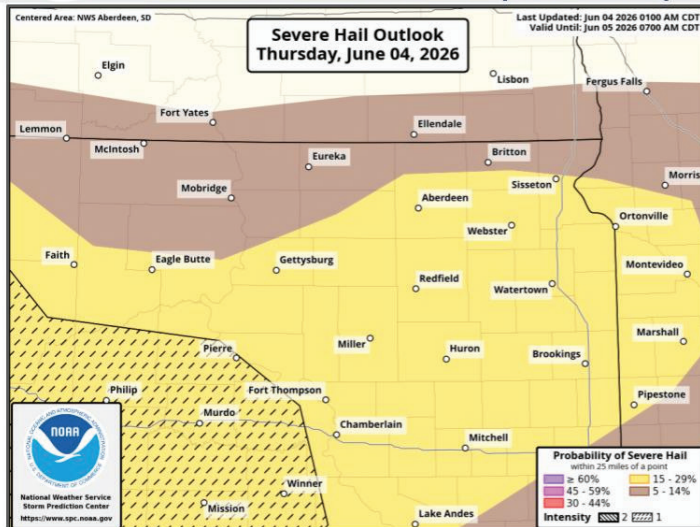


Large Hail and Damaging Wind Threat This Afternoon And Evening

June 4, 2026

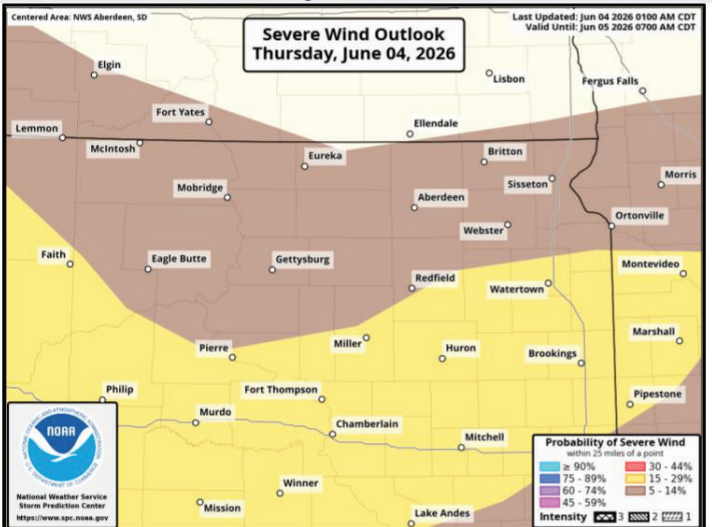
3:34 AM

An isolated Tornado is also possible for portions of the James Valley into south central SD



Hazard: 1-2" diameter hail

Impacts: damage to vehicles, homes, property



Hazard: 60-70 mph winds

Impacts: Tree and power line damage possible



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Large to very large hail, possibly up to 2 inches in diameter, is possible across portions of south central SD into parts of northeast SD. Severe wind gusts of 60-70 mph will also be possible along with an isolated tornado or two.



Storm Timing Today (June 4th)

June 4, 2026

3:34 AM CDT

- The **primary threat for severe thunderstorms will be this afternoon** (initial development before 3pm) from the Missouri River to the James River.
- The **storms will move eastward through the evening** before exiting northeastern SD by 3am Friday.
- Timing of highest risk for severe storms is highlighted in the **red boxes**.

Probability of Precipitation (%) Forecast

	6/4 Thu											6/5 Fri								
	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am	
McIntosh	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	20	25	35	35	25	30	20	15	10	5	5	5	
Eagle Butte	35	20	15	10	10	10	15	15	35	40	50	50	35	40	30	35	20	15	10	
Murdo	30	50	50	35	40	35	35	30	15	20	50	40	50	60	55	60	50	55	55	
Mobridge	20	25	30	20	20	20	25	20	20	20	25	50	35	30	25	20	15	15	15	
Pierre	35	45	45	35	35	35	35	40	30	25	40	55	60	55	45	45	55	60	60	
Gettysburg	45	60	60	40	35	45	45	30	30	30	35	55	65	50	40	35	40	35	35	
Eureka	15	30	25	20	20	20	20	15	15	15	15	20	45	45	30	25	20	20	20	
Chamberlain	10	40	40	55	60	45	30	25	45	20	30	55	60	25	35	35	40	50	65	
Miller	25	40	60	65	45	40	45	60	65	70	65	55	65	55	70	55	60	65	65	
Redfield	20	35	50	50	55	45	45	50	45	75	70	60	75	60	70	55	35	35	35	
Aberdeen	20	35	35	40	30	30	30	35	30	35	50	50	65	70	70	65	35	30	20	
Britton	5	10	25	25	30	25	25	30	30	30	45	45	55	50	60	60	60	45	30	
Clark	20	35	40	45	55	50	40	55	65	75	70	60	45	60	65	70	55	40	30	
Webster	10	20	25	35	45	35	35	45	45	45	75	50	55	45	60	60	65	50	30	
Watertown	15	25	30	30	35	55	35	65	70	70	65	55	35	25	35	55	65	50	30	
Sisseton	5	5	15	20	25	25	35	20	40	40	30	55	50	65	35	45	60	70	50	35
Milbank	5	10	20	25	35	45	40	50	65	60	70	65	35	25	25	30	60	45	25	
Wheaton	0	0	5	15	20	20	20	35	30	25	40	45	55	45	55	45	55	50	45	

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80
Probability of Precipitation Forecast (%)



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 4:34 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 4:27 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 10:27 AM

Precip: 0.56

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1964

Average High: 77

Average Low: 52

Average Precip in June.: 0.32

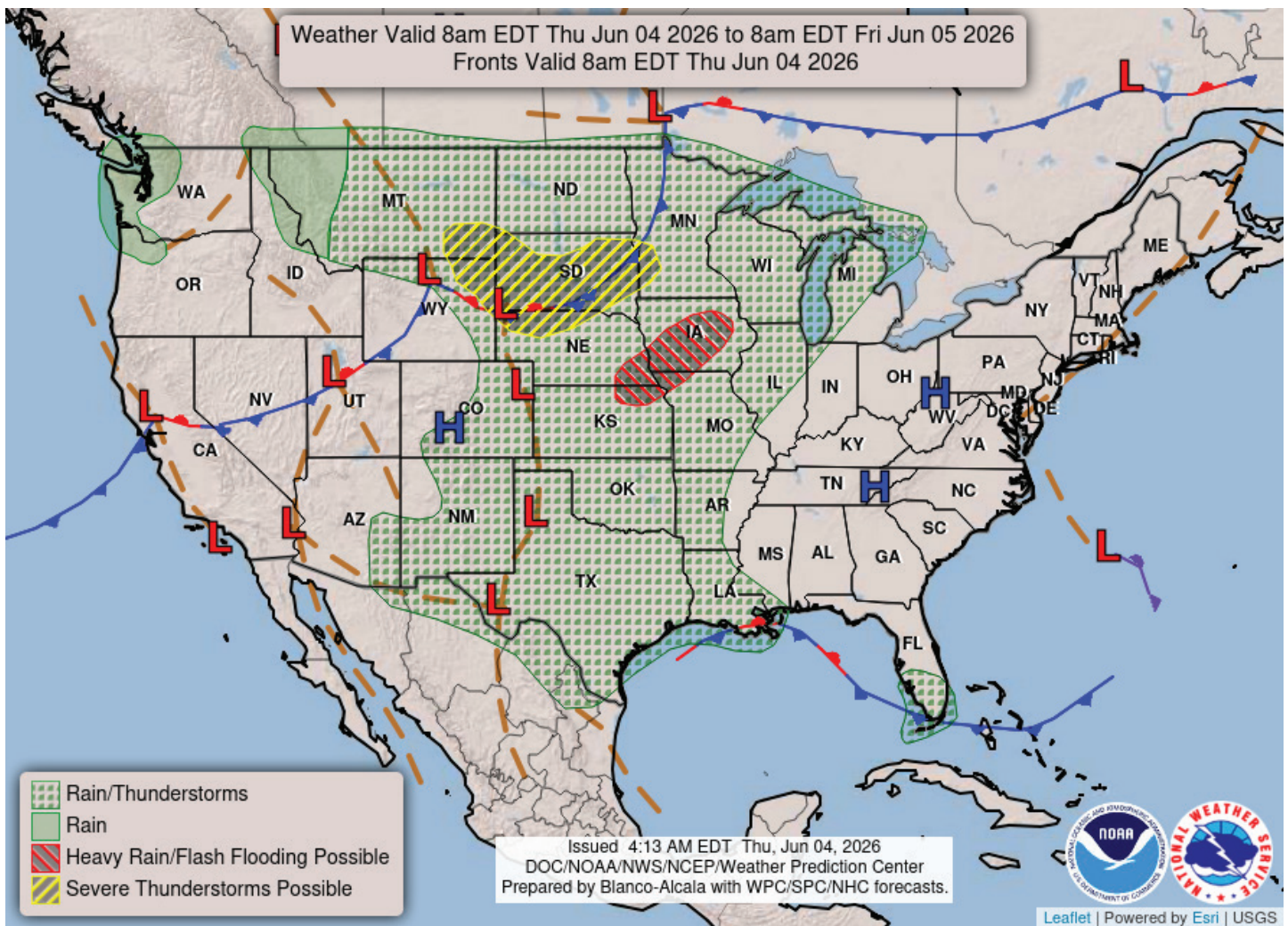
Precip to date in June.: 0.56

Average Precip to date: 7.57

Precip Year to Date: 6.92

Sunset Tonight: 9:15 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45 am



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Today in Weather History

June 4th, 1984: Heavy rains of up to seven inches caused the Bad River to rise over 23 feet in six hours at Fort Pierre. Flash flooding resulted as a dam 17 miles west of Fort Pierre gave way, and an irrigation dam near town was damaged. Water covered some roads and bridges, and many homes had water damage. Strong thunderstorm winds gusting up to 60 mph downed numerous branches and signs in Faulk, Edmunds, McPherson, and Brown Counties.

June 4th, 1991: Heavy rains of 2 to 5 inches caused street flooding in Harrold. Several county roads in Stanley, Sully, Hughes, and Lyman Counties were closed due to flooding. Some rainfall amounts include 1.83 inches at Oahe Dam, 1.96 inches 12 miles SSW of Harrold, and 3.20 inches two miles North of Onaka.

June 4th, 1993: An earthquake measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale shook a portion of northeast South Dakota but caused no real damage or injuries. The epicenter was 22 miles northwest of Morris, Minnesota, or 38 miles east of Sisseton, and it was felt in most of Roberts, Grant, and Deuel Counties. The quake was the first in the area since 1975.

1825 — A hurricane struck Long Island NY leveling trees and causing damage to ships. The early season hurricane, which originated around Cuba, caused major damage along the Atlantic coast from Charleston SC to New York City. Many were lost at sea. (David Ludlum)

1860 — Iowa's Commanche Tornado , with wind speeds estimated in excess of 300 mph, was unquestionably one of the worst experienced by early settlers, with nearly a million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1982 — A four day storm began over New England which produced up to 14 inches of rain in southern Connecticut breaching twenty-three dams and breaking two others. Damage was estimated at more than 276 million dollars. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Early morning thunderstorms in south Texas produced 6.5 inches of rain at Hockheim, and five inches at Hallettsville, in just a few hours. Afternoon thunderstorms in Virginia deluged northern Halifax County with 5.5 inches of rain in two hours. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 76 mph at Dusty WA, and wind gusts to 88 mph at Swanquarter NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A dozen cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Atlantic City NJ with a reading of 40 degrees. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Glasgow MT and Havre MT with readings of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Southern Plains Region and the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Southern Atlantic Coast Region during the day and into the night. Just four tornadoes were reported, but there were 87 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



The Blessings of Inadequacy

Our inadequacy drives us to God—and that's when we learn to lean on His power.

2 Corinthians 3:1-6: 1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?

2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul never claimed he was capable of accomplishing all that God called him to do. Instead, he learned to look past his own limitations to the sufficiency of Christ. We too can discover blessings hidden in our experiences of weakness.

Our limitations drive us to God. When we realize a situation is beyond our ability, we can turn to Him through Scripture and prayer for guidance and power.

Recognizing our need motivates reliance on divine empowerment. God never intended for us to handle things alone. We become adequate only as we draw from the Holy Spirit's inexhaustible strength and let Him work through us.

By using unlikely people, God demonstrates what great things He can do. He delights in choosing ordinary individuals to carry out His plan. There's no limit to what He can accomplish through someone willing to submit to Him.

Acknowledging our need challenges our faith. Paul says, "Our adequacy is from God" (v. 5). Those who trust this promise and step out in obedience will grow in faith.

Let the Lord work through you: Rely upon Him and allow Christ to live in you. He will replace your anxiety with contentment.

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:
06.03.26

4 13 32 51 55 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.02.26

15 26 43 48 60 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$368,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.26

2 5 19 22 24 6

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$28,580,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 31 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.26

2 23 24 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$119,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.26

26 28 31 56 64 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 15 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.26

14 16 38 55 64 12

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$212,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 15 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Takeaways from primaries featuring Spencer Pratt, a missing congressman and a rare Trump setback

By STEVEN SLOAN, STEVE PEOPLES, HUMERA LODHI and SIMRAN PARWANI Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The contours of a premier Senate race took shape in Iowa, while President Donald Trump's endorsement streak ran into a roadblock there.

Democrats chose a nominee for a House race in New Jersey that could decide control of the chamber. But much of the focus was on California, home to Hollywood but not a governor's race packing much star power.

Here are takeaways from primary elections Tuesday in California, Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico and South Dakota.

Iowa Democrats rally behind former Paralympian in marquee Senate race

Democrats stunned by how Trump has remade American politics have spent the past decade debating which type of candidate is best positioned to energize voters and win elections, not moral victories.

Iowa marked the latest stop in this sometimes agonizing conversation.

The party's establishment supported Josh Turek, a state representative who presented a compelling personal biography that included competing for the United States in four Paralympics. State Sen. Zach Wahls offered himself as a more disruptive figure, refusing to back Chuck Schumer of New York as the Senate Democratic leader if he were elected.

Democratic voters united behind Turek, who will face Republican Ashley Hinson in November.

At this point, many of the party's most fractious races are behind them. But Turek's win could be closely watched in Michigan, where one of the last major Democratic primaries will unfold on Aug. 4. Rep. Haley Stevens is emerging as the establishment candidate there vying against state Sen. Mallory McMorrow and progressive Abdul El-Sayed.

Both races are important for Democrats increasingly bullish about regaining the Senate majority. To get there, they must retain the open seat in Michigan while looking for pickup opportunities in places such as Iowa.

The results in the fall could have longer-term implications as Democrats look to rebuild their standing in the Midwest, which swung to the Republican president in 2024.

Trump's endorsement streak faces setback in Iowa

In just the past month, the power of Trump's endorsement helped end the political careers of two senators — John Cornyn of Texas and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana — and Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky.

But Trump was unable to lift Rep. Randy Feenstra to victory in Iowa's Republican primary for governor. Even though Trump jumped in with his backing last week, Feenstra narrowly lost to Zach Lahn.

The outcome was a rare setback for Trump, who basks in his ability to sway the vote among Republicans with his endorsement. It now sets up what Democrats see as one of their best opportunities to pick up a governorship this year.

Democrats nominated Rob Sand, who ran unopposed in the primary. He has the rural roots that have become rare among Democrats and is a proven winner in a Republican-leaning state, having been elected twice as auditor.

Lahn was not well known in Iowa politics when he launched his campaign in November, but he built support among conservatives. He championed policies including a total ban on abortion and keeping liberal ideology out of public school classrooms.

Lahn also developed a following with the "Make America Healthy Again" movement, which has clashed with the Trump administration over its embrace of pesticides.

The California drama drags on

The Los Angeles mayor's race was jolted by the candidacy of Spencer Pratt, who starred on the reality

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television show "The Hills." The Republican has been trying to capitalize on dissatisfaction with Democrat Karen Bass, who is seeking a second term.

Bass secured enough votes to make the November runoff, but it was unclear who her opponent will be. Also running is Nithya Raman, a progressive members of the City Council.

The race for California governor has been especially chaotic.

With Democrat Gavin Newsom barred from seeking a third term, about 60 names were on the ballot to succeed him. Some of the state's most prominent politicians, including former Vice President Kamala Harris and Sen. Alex Padilla, did not run. One who did, former Rep. Eric Swalwell, withdrew after being accused of sexual assault, which he denied.

Under the state's primary system, all candidates appear on a single ballot and the top two finishers advance to the November general election, regardless of party.

In the final days of the campaign, much of the attention focused on Democrats Xavier Becerra, a former congressman and state attorney general who was health secretary under Democratic President Joe Biden, and Tom Steyer, a billionaire known for his climate activism. Republican Steve Hilton campaigned with Trump's endorsement.

The three were leading in early returns after polls closed.

If Becerra were to advance to one of the two slots on the fall ballot, he presents a natural choice for voters more comfortable with a traditional candidate. Steyer and Hilton have both presented themselves as advocating significant changes.

California has been governed by establishment-oriented Democrats for two decades. The primary results will indicate the level of change being sought in a state confronting serious challenges ranging from affordability to crime and will signal whether the \$200 million Steyer put into the race from his own money turned out to be a good investment.

Independents emerge in Senate races in Republican strongholds

If Democrats hope to compete in Senate contests in Republican strongholds this fall, they may have to abandon their party's nominees and rally around independents.

That's one of the takeaways after voters on Tuesday finalized general election matchups in Montana and South Dakota, where little-known Democrats earned their party's nominations. In both states, however, higher-profile independent candidates also qualified for the general election ballot.

It's much the same in Idaho and Nebraska, which held Senate primaries last month. Democratic leaders in Nebraska are openly endorsing independent Dan Osborne over their party's nominee, who has promised to drop out to make it easier for Osborne to win.

In Montana, independent Seth Bodnar, a former University of Montana president, looks like the strongest opponent to Republican Kurt Alme — on paper, at least. Bodnar raised more money than all of the five Democratic primary candidates combined. He has even significantly outraised Trump-backed Alme.

In South Dakota, Sen. Mike Rounds cruised to the Republican nomination on Tuesday. He will face Democrat Julian Beaudion, a former highway patrol trooper and small business owner. But it's a former Democrat now running as an independent, military veteran Brian Bengs, who some Democrats believe may be the tougher challenger.

The Democrats shift toward independents reflects the party's toxic brand in Republican strongholds.

Absent congressman gets a Democratic challenger

Democrats nominated Rebecca Bennett to take on Republican Rep. Tom Kean Jr. in New Jersey's 7th Congressional District, which stretches from the New York City suburbs to the Pennsylvania border.

The seat is critical for Republicans as they defend a narrow majority in Congress. The race was always going to be one of the most competitive on a map that has been increasingly gerrymandered to protect both parties. But it's under particularly close scrutiny because of Kean's extended and unexplained medical absence.

He's missed more than 100 votes since casting his last one on March 5.

Bennett, a former Navy pilot, was among the Democrats in the primary who made the absence and the lack of clarity surrounding it an issue, arguing Kean wasn't around to protect money for a new rail

tunnel connecting New Jersey and New York City. That line of criticism will likely only grow heading into the general election.

Trump reiterated his endorsement of Kean on Monday. The congressman released a statement Tuesday saying he is "focused on my recovery" and would return to "in person work within a matter of weeks."

New Mexico could make history in governor's race

The stage is set for Deb Haaland to make history this fall after Biden's interior secretary secured the Democratic nomination for governor in New Mexico.

Haaland was the first Native American to serve in the Cabinet. This fall, she could become the first Native American woman in U.S. history to be elected governor.

She defeated Albuquerque-based District Attorney Sam Bregman, the father of Chicago Cubs All-Star Alex Bregman, in a Democratic primary campaign that emphasized her ancestral roots in addition to lowering costs and her governing experience.

Haaland will face Republican Greggory Hull in the general election.

Police warn families of Tiananmen crackdown dead not to visit graves on 37th anniversary

By KEN MORITSUGU and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese authorities are snuffing out any remembrance of the deadly 1989 military crackdown on student-led pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square, which happened 37 years ago Thursday, in a further tightening of a yearslong campaign to erase what happened from public memory.

Police told relatives of the victims they would not be allowed to visit a cemetery in Beijing on the anniversary of the crackdown, a person with knowledge of the matter said. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of fear of retribution.

Relatives of the victims visited the cemetery on the anniversary for more than 30 years to read memorial statements with police keeping watch, Amnesty International said. They belong to a group called Tiananmen Mothers.

Hundreds of people, and possibly thousands, were killed in 1989 as troops advanced through crowds that were trying to stop the military from reaching the protesters in Tiananmen Square, a vast plaza in the center of the Chinese capital. The decision by the Communist Party leadership to send in the military was a pivotal moment in China's modern history, determining that the market reform that transformed the country into the world's second largest economy would not be coupled with political liberalization.

Rubio says censorship can't erase the past

In Hong Kong, police stepped up security Thursday to prevent any kind of commemoration at or near a park where a massive candlelight vigil lit up the night on the anniversary every year until a clampdown following major anti-government protests in 2019. On Wednesday, they stopped two performance artists from making symbolic gestures in separate incidents. One briefly held up a question-mark-shaped balloon outside a department store.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who recently accompanied President Donald Trump on a state visit to Beijing, issued a statement marking the anniversary. "No amount of censorship can erase the past," it said. "Those who sacrificed to uphold their unalienable rights of free expression and peaceful assembly will be vindicated someday."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissed the U.S. as a smear on her nation's political system. "We urge the U.S. side to ... stop using so-called democracy and human rights as a pretext to interfere in China's internal affairs," she said.

Tiananmen Mothers calls crackdown a crime

Tiananmen Mothers issued an annual appeal for justice ahead of this year's anniversary. The statement, signed by 107 people, demanded full disclosure of what happened, compensation for the victims and their families and the pursuit of legal accountability for those responsible.

"The sacrifice of our family members is an indelible pain etched in our hearts. Our tears have run dry,

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grief is buried deep within, what remains is eternal remembrance of our family members and hatred for the crime of massacring the people," Zhang Xianling, a member of the group, said in a video message posted on Facebook — which is blocked in China.

Amnesty said it is deeply troubling that China's suppression of the commemoration appears to be escalating. "Banning the relatives of people killed in the Tiananmen crackdown from visiting their loved ones' graves is a heartless act by the Chinese authorities," Sarah Brooks, the organization's deputy director for Asia, said in a statement.

The Beijing Public Security Bureau did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

Hong Kong has banned an annual vigil

Authorities in Hong Kong have banned the vigil since 2020, at first citing the COVID-19 pandemic. Simon Ng, a past participant, walked around the nearby Causeway Bay shopping district to mark the anniversary. "There are some things I can neither forget nor let go, so I have to come and and take a walk," he said.

Three of the organizers of the vigil have been charged under a 2020 national security law. One pleaded guilty, which may result in a lesser sentence. The other two have been tried and are awaiting a verdict.

One of them, lawyer Chow Hang-tung, said in an online post published last weekend that she would go on a 37-hour hunger strike in prison. "Behind the glitter of power and dictatorship lies the blood and broken dreams of ordinary people. For in amnesia lies the demise of democracy," she wrote.

Derek Chu, a former district councilor, said on Instagram that he visited Chow on Thursday and told her he would also stop eating for 37 hours to show his support. He added that a shop he runs is giving out LED candles that can be used to remember the victims.

Women are the first caregivers in this Ebola outbreak and the most at risk

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Every day for the past week, Aline Kasiwa has fed her sick mother, helped her drink and washed her clothes, all while fearing she could catch the Ebola virus as eastern Congo is plagued by one of the fastest-spreading outbreaks of the disease on record.

"She is the only family I have left. I cannot abandon her," Kasiwa told The Associated Press, adding that she is too afraid to take her mother to the hospital where an infection could be confirmed. "These days we hear that many people are dying there, even nurses," she said.

With no protective equipment beyond a cheap face mask, the 28-year-old in Bunia, a city at the heart of the outbreak, symbolizes the women in eastern Congo who are almost always the first caregiver, a role that health workers say is putting them at higher risk of contracting Ebola.

"It's the woman who gives them a bath, it's the woman who feeds them, and it's the woman who's there to wash the dirty clothes and everything else," said Dr. Furaha Elisabeth, director of the Karibuni Wa Maman gynecology and obstetrics clinic in Bunia.

Bundibugyo, the type of Ebola in this outbreak, has no approved treatment or vaccine. Even health workers have said they don't have the masks, gloves and other gear to protect themselves.

That leaves some women with impossible choices, especially pregnant ones.

"When you see the way people die — even the nurses who treat us are dying — how can you not be afraid?" said Anny Ekyambo, a 32-year-old in Bunia who said she is too afraid to go to a clinic for checkups, even though she is five months pregnant.

Ebola outbreaks have affected women more

The outbreak was identified weeks late because the rare Bundibugyo type was not tested for at first. Congolese authorities said Wednesday they have confirmed 363 cases, including 62 deaths, and more are suspected. Neighboring Uganda has reported 15 confirmed cases, including one death.

It is not clear how many women have been infected. But history shows that previous Ebola outbreaks have affected women more.

In the first recorded outbreak in the 1970s, women accounted for 56% of deaths, UN Women said.

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During the 2018-2020 outbreak in Congo, the deadliest in the country's history, women and girls made up about two-thirds of reported cases.

"We will certainly see the same pattern emerge in the current outbreak," Sofia Calltorp, UN Women's chief of humanitarian action, said in a statement. "Ebola transmission follows social realities. The virus spreads along the lines of care-giving, domestic labor, front-line health work and burial practices."

Women in many eastern Congo communities are the ones preparing bodies for burial.

'They had no protection and no equipment'

At the Karibuni wa Maman clinic, staff said they had received no personal protective equipment since the outbreak began, despite appeals to health authorities.

Patients showing symptoms are examined at the clinic before being referred to larger treatment centers, exposing doctors and nurses to potential infection with minimal safeguards.

Julienne Lusenge, president of Women's Solidarity for Inclusive Peace and Development, the aid group running the clinic, said they have sought protective equipment from various partners, receiving only hand sanitizer and a few masks for nurses.

She said the equipment gap also endangers the women caring for sick relatives at home, with most of them unaware that Ebola may be the cause.

"During previous outbreaks, many women died because they were the ones nursing sick family members," Lusenge said.

Despite new arrivals of aid and better-organized health facilities in recent days, Doctors Without Borders has said the virus continues to spread faster than the response.

"Nobody knows the true scale and severity of this outbreak," Dr. Alan Gonzalez, the medical charity's deputy director of operations, has said in a statement.

The outbreak is unfolding in unforgiving surroundings. Ituri province has poor road networks and under-equipped health facilities more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from Congo's capital, Kinshasa.

Attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces, a rebel group allied with the Islamic State group, and a coalition of ethnic militias also have hindered the response. Other cases have been reported in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces where the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group controls key cities Goma and Bukavu.

Wariness of outsiders after decades of conflict in the remote region is another factor keeping people away from clinics and in women's care.

Pregnant women can be particularly exposed

Fears of contracting Ebola at a health center have become common.

Ekyambo, the pregnant woman in Bunia, said other women in the community share her fear of going to the clinic.

"I know that there are steps we must follow with the doctors to monitor the pregnancy and the baby, but we have no choice because this epidemic frightens us," she said.

UN Women has said pregnant women could be more exposed by their frequent contact with health services.

Lusenga, however, warned that staying away from clinics could mean missing crucial prenatal and post-natal care consultations.

"We risk seeing a rise in prenatal and postnatal mortality, for both mothers and children," she said.

North Korea unveils a new plant to produce fuel for nuclear weapons

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Thursday unveiled a new facility to produce nuclear bomb fuels, with leader Kim Jong Un announcing plans to bolster the country's nuclear forces "at an exponential rate."

Some experts still question whether North Korea has functioning nuclear missiles that can reach the U.S.

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mainland. But the nuclear plant's disclosure implies that Kim is eager to cement his country's status as a nuclear power and has no intentions of placing his bomb program on a negotiating table.

After visiting the site on Wednesday, Kim said he and other top officials "confirmed the order of priority for implementing the ambitious future plan designed to beef up our state's nuclear forces at an exponential rate," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The site is likely a uranium enrichment plant

KCNA said the facility used "more sophisticated technology" but didn't provide further details like its location. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed the site as a uranium enrichment plant and said it was closely coordinating with the United States to monitor North Korean nuclear activities.

KCNA photos showed Kim walking through narrow aisles lined with dense rows of silver tubes and pipes, in what appeared to be a centrifuge hall. Another image showed him speaking with senior officials in a meeting room, where a blurred graphic depicting a cone-shaped object was spread across a table. It wasn't immediately clear whether the graphic showed a warhead design.

It's the third time that North Korea has disclosed a uranium enrichment site. In 2010, North Korea showed one at its main Yongbyon nuclear complex to visiting American scholars, and in 2024, North Korea released photos of another covert uranium-enrichment plant, which experts believe was at its Kangson complex.

Experts say the newly disclosed site is likely an additional uranium enrichment facility that North Korea is suspected to have been building at Yongbyon.

"Based on a preliminary analysis, it appears that this facility is likely the newly added Yongbyon enrichment facility. It appears to have two levels and represents a substantial expansion of enrichment capability," said Ankit Panda, an expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"North Korea's ongoing nuclear expansion does not have a near-term end in sight," he said.

Last September, South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said that North Korea was operating a total of four uranium enrichment facilities including the Yongbyon complex, and that they were running everyday.

Kim wants nuclear weapons state

During his plant visit, Kim said the urgency for bolstering up the country's nuclear war deterrent, both in quality and quantity, has grown because of confrontations with "the most ferocious enemies," an apparent reference to the U.S. and South Korea.

Kim said exercising "the position of a nuclear weapons state" is his country's "invariable" stand. He said North Korea's nuclear materials production capacity has more than doubled compared with five years ago, a claim that cannot be verified independently.

Experts say Kim wants an international recognition as a nuclear state so that he could demand the lifting of U.N. economic sanctions. They say Kim would ultimately push for arms reductions talks with the U.S. as a way to win concessions in return for a partial surrender of his nuclear capability.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to resume diplomacy with Kim, but the North Korean leader responded the Americans must first drop its demand for North Korea to denuclearize as a precondition for talks.

Some question North Korea's nuclear program

Since his first round of nuclear diplomacy collapsed in 2019, Kim has performed a provocative run of weapons tests and vowed repeatedly to "exponentially" expand the country's nuclear arsenal.

This led to many experts believing North Korea now likely has nuclear missiles capable of striking the U.S. mainland. But some still note North Korea hasn't proved it mastered last-remaining technological hurdles to obtain such missiles, including ensuring its warheads survive the conditions of atmospheric reentry. They say North Korea also need to perfect technologies to place multiple nuclear warheads on a single missile to defeat U.S. missile shields.

A senior South Korean official told lawmakers in 2018 that North Korea was estimated to have manufactured between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons, but some experts now put the size of the North's arsenal at more than 100 warheads.

In 2023, North Korea unveiled a type of battlefield nuclear warheads. Some analysts speculated the

warhead's unveiling might be a prelude to a nuclear test. But North Korea hasn't carried out a test, which would be its seventh detonation overall and the first since September 2017.

What to know about the growing opposition to Trump family-linked resort in Albania

By ZANA CIMILI Associated Press

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — A massive coastal development project linked to Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump, is facing growing resistance from protesters in Albania.

Police fired water cannon and clashed with protesters on Wednesday in the latest demonstration in the capital, Tirana.

The government says the development on the Adriatic coast would be transformational for the former communist nation as it seeks to enter the high-end tourism market and pushes for European Union membership.

But the venture, spanning an abandoned island and a nearby stretch of seafront on Albania's southern coast, has drawn opposition from environmental campaigners and critics of long-time Socialist Prime Minister Edi Rama.

Kushner and Ivanka Trump found the site on a barefoot hike

The luxury project has two components: a coastal development in the Narta Lagoon area, which is a wildlife reserve, and a smaller resort on the nearby uninhabited island of Sazan, a communist-era military base.

The planned development of hotels, apartments, villas and a marina is linked to Kushner and Trump's daughter, Ivanka Trump.

In an interview this week with U.S. podcaster David Senra, Ivanka Trump said they discovered the site by accident.

"We were on a friend's boat, and we stopped for a swim. Effectively, that's how we found it," she said. "We swam to the island. We went on a hike, barefoot all the way up to the top, and we were just captivated."

An investment firm linked to Kushner has been granted special investor status by Albanian authorities.

Harsh rule, pristine beaches

Albania has 450 kilometers (280 miles) of coast that remained largely underdeveloped during decades of harsh communist rule.

Protest groups fear the sections of that pristine coastline could be snapped up by powerful investors. And public anger grew after video showed an activist being dragged by a private security guard while demonstrating at the site.

The development is planned within a nature reserve and one of Albania's most valuable biodiversity areas, a key stopover for migratory birds along the Adriatic coast.

Protesters have carried cardboard cut-outs of pink flamingos, one of the protected migratory bird species, at rallies in Tirana.

Since late May, excavators and other heavy machinery have entered the area, opening access routes, digging into the sand, clearing land among pine trees and installing fencing.

Environmental groups from Albania and elsewhere in Europe condemned the work, with one prominent local group charging that long-protected habitats are being "irreversibly destroyed."

A multi-billion dollar bonanza?

Albania's state anti-corruption agency has confirmed it opened an investigation related to the project but has not disclosed details.

The government says the land earmarked for the project is privately owned. But competing claims have emerged questioning the privatization — a common type of legal dispute.

Rama has committed to the venture, saying it would align with Albania's ambition to become a major global tourism destination.

"Albania should not be a country that fears an extraordinary project like this one, where exceptional

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partners have come together to invest 4 billion euros (\$4.6 billion)," Rama said.

He added: "There is no chance for this investment to stop as long as I am here."

However, the demise of a similar project in Serbia offers a cautionary tale. In November, Serbia's Parliament passed a special law to enable the building of a luxury complex in the capital, Belgrade, to be financed by an investment company linked to Kushner.

The following month, Serbia's prosecutor for organized crime charged four people, including a government minister, with abuse of office and falsifying of documents to help pave the way for the development.

Kushner later withdrew from the planned multi-million investment that would have replaced a sprawling bombed-out military complex, a designated heritage zone whose legal protection was lifted by the former officials now on trial.

A garbage crisis engulfs Havana as fuel shortages stall trash pickup

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — On a recent afternoon in Cuba, the temperature climbed and anxiety grew among the residents of a Havana street.

Their focus was an improvised dump site on the sidewalk with rotting food scraps, torn bags, cardboard and rubble. Swarms of flies and stray cats gathered around the trash whose stench wafted on the breeze from the nearby sea.

"What you're looking at is depressing," lamented María Odalys Ramírez, a 63-year-old who lives across the street from the capital's iconic Hermanos Ameijeiras hospital. "The trash in this area, the flies, the rats, the filth — it's completely unsanitary."

For months, residents of Havana — home to 2 million of Cuba's almost 10 million residents — have lived with piles of garbage accumulating on almost every street corner. The situation deteriorated after a U.S. energy blockade triggered power outages, water shortages and a fuel crisis that brought state-run garbage trucks to a standstill.

Without garbage collection, residents have begun burning waste in the streets, raising alarm among health officials over potentially toxic smoke.

Residents fear the coming months will bring worse conditions as summer heat intensifies and hurricane season begins.

A citywide tour by The Associated Press revealed identical scenes across Havana neighborhoods where locals said garbage trucks pass only irregularly.

In the city center and on the outskirts, cars, bicycles and pedestrians weave around the trash piles. Others pick through it, hoping to salvage something useful.

Havana as of last July was producing the equivalent of about 12 Olympic-sized swimming pools of solid waste every day, according the latest municipal figures available. Even then, municipal services collected just 57%.

The "improper management of urban solid waste" has been identified as a primary environmental challenge in Cuba's national strategy, said Odalys Goicochea, an official at the ministry of science, technology and the environment.

Now, Goicochea warned, the current garbage collection situation, combined with rising temperatures and impending rains, could worsen the situation. The heat and moisture threaten to trigger a proliferation of disease-carrying flies and mosquitoes.

The crisis has sparked citizen initiatives to clean up neighborhoods.

One is El Batazo, an initiative operating across eight Havana blocks. A collector rings a bell twice daily to pick up pre-sorted household trash, while other project members sweep the streets.

Members then sell recyclable raw materials like aluminum and glass, repurpose food scraps to feed livestock and place the remaining trash into a container for later transport to a landfill.

"The fundamental impact of this project is proving to the community that it can be done," said Evelyn

Martínez, a collaborator at El Batazo. "It is entirely possible to live in a cleaner environment, give value to what we call 'trash' and put it to good use."

Trump administration has separated dozens of children from their parents for a second time, AP finds

By GARANCE BURKE and SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

Eleven-year-old Ederson Galicia Alva had just stepped off the plane and into the Miami airport's dim hallways when federal agents pulled his mother aside for questioning. Again.

Panic welled up. His excitement at soon being back at recess with his Florida classmates fell away. Would the government take her away again?

This was not his first trauma. In 2018, when he was just 3 years old, Ederson was taken from his mother's arms at the U.S.-Mexico border under the first Trump administration's family separation policy and kept apart from her in a government facility for months. They were finally reunited after lawyers intervened. Then, in June of last year, he and his mother were separated a second time, despite legal protections meant to keep them and families like theirs together.

He later joined his mother in Guatemala. After a destitute, torturous 11 months in the indigenous highlands, Ederson's family was allowed to return to Florida last week, following a federal judge's order that the government had acted illegally.

Now, eight years after President Donald Trump's forcible border separations came to an official halt following global outrage, an Associated Press investigation has found that the government has re-separated dozens of children from their families, despite a landmark legal settlement meant to keep them together. Some of their parents have been locked in immigration detention facilities for months, others deported back to their home countries after being taken from their families once again. In some cases, immigration officials conducting interior arrests deported people despite discovering they were legally off limits for removal, according to emails obtained by AP.

"Not only has the government refused to acknowledge the horror of the initial separations during Trump I, but it is now detaining and deporting these same families," said Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union and lead counsel in the lawsuit that ended the policy. "These children have suffered enough without re-traumatizing them."

Trump successfully ran for reelection on an anti-immigration platform. Under his second term, the administration has vowed to deport more than 1 million people per year. Federal agents have been plucking people from their communities so swiftly that, according to the Brookings Institution, now the parents of tens of thousands of children have been detained.

This time, family separations often look different from Trump's first term. In 2018, Ederson and other children at the border were taken from their parents, who were detained separately and overwhelmingly charged criminally with illegal entry. Then, the government was unable to reunite them for months because adults and children's information was kept in different computer systems. A judge barred the government from separating most families at the border and ordered the government to bring the families back together after the ACLU filed a class action lawsuit. Later, a court settlement banned most family separations to deter immigration until December 2031.

Today, if parents are arrested or deported under the president's push for mass deportations, they are being made to choose whether to leave their children behind in the United States.

"DHS complies with all court orders, even as radical NGOs shop for the most favorable forum and activist judges seek to thwart our operations," acting Assistant Secretary Lauren Bis, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson, said in response to AP requests for comment about the government's policies toward separated families.

Government attorneys have argued in recent court filings that there are no legal restrictions on "the government's statutory authority to execute orders of removal." Bis added that enforcing immigration law

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was "not optional," and that "every removal of an illegal alien helps restore order and reinforce the rule of law."

Ederson's family recently was allowed to return, but their status is still on shaky ground.

Separated at the border, then again in Florida

After being taken from his mother, Mirsy Maricela Alva López, and confined to a government shelter in Arizona as a toddler for four and a half months, Ederson barely recognized her once they were reunited, she said. Vivid nightmares haunted him throughout his time in elementary school, where he learned to read in English in classrooms amid lush lawns and palm trees less than 10 miles from Mar-a-Lago, Trump's Winter White House.

Once a federal judge approved a settlement to the class action suit under the Biden administration, Ederson's family and those like his got legal status to stay in the U.S., with pathways for residency and asylum, and his mother got a work permit. And after months of mental health services to address his ongoing fear that his mother would never return, in early June last year — about five months after the beginning of Trump's second administration and the president's resumed anti-immigration push — his therapist finally said he had made so much progress he could put his weekly sessions on pause.

Two weeks later, Alva López was stopped by federal agents as she and co-workers were en route to a landscaping job near Mar-a-Lago. The agents, wearing brown uniforms, never gave a reason for the stop or identified themselves before transferring Alva López to two Florida jails, then to ICE custody in Louisiana, and finally to a plane full of shackled deportees heading to Guatemala City, she said.

"I felt the very same thing I went through the first time," Alva López said, weeping. "I was living it all over again."

Alva López was separated from Ederson and his older sister, Briseidy, for a week, and not given the chance to speak with an immigration official about her status or legal protections, said Kelly Kribs, an attorney with the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, which has supported Alva López's family's return to the U.S.

When she finally managed to call Ederson and Briseidy, they couldn't stop sobbing. Alva López said she asked her sister to buy airplane tickets to send them to Guatemala City. She met them the next day at the airport and traveled with them nine more hours down highways and rutted roads to reach San Martín Cuchumatán, a hamlet in the highlands where the children were born.

The three of them shared a tiny bedroom with a dusty floor with Alva López's parents and brother in an adobe brick home with a sheet metal roof, nothing like the leafy cul-de-sacs of South Florida. The school, where all lessons are in Spanish, was a mile's walk, and none of the children in town spoke English, Ederson said.

Instead of clocking in to trim the gardens of West Palm Beach estates, each day Alva López fed the chickens and ducks in a small coop behind the house, washed the family's laundry by hand and cooked meals on an open fire.

And Ederson was back to waking up at night fearing his future. At Northmore Elementary School, he had been doing well in fifth grade. In Guatemala, he repeated fourth grade, this time in Spanish, and was quizzed on the history and culture of a country he barely knew. His friendships weren't as close as in West Palm Beach. Sometimes when he felt sad, he watched the school's old online videos to see his old friends.

"We used to play and chat. Sometimes they would help me when I didn't understand the lesson, and I would help them with math," he said, fighting back tears. "I have very few friends here."

Ederson still doesn't want to talk about the separations, and he can't stop asking his mother why she went to work that day. But he is clear on one thing: he never wants to be apart from his mother again.

'Lasting, excruciating harm'

In late 2017, immigration officials began forcibly separating parents and children at the U.S.-Mexico border, under a policy championed by Stephen Miller, Trump's then-senior policy advisor who is now White House deputy chief of staff. After advocates got word, the ACLU filed a lawsuit in February 2018 to halt the practice called *Ms. L v. U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement*, on behalf of a Congolese mother the Trump administration separated from her 7-year-old daughter for four months. It later became a class

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action suit.

It wasn't until thousands of families were torn apart that a judge ordered the government to end separations, saying it caused "lasting, excruciating harm." According to the ACLU's most recent accounting, the number of separated parents and children, and their impacted family members covered by the settlement is far greater than had been previously reported — over 11,800 — and because the government deported so many people before the practice was banned, the full scope may never be known. The ACLU also provided AP with new information surrounding Ms. L class members who have been detained and deported during the second Trump administration, including that dozens of children were re-separated. Legal filings in the Ms. L case and other immigration attorneys working with separated families also detailed the re-separations of children.

Under a 2023 settlement agreement signed by the Biden administration, Ms. L class members — including separated parents, children and other close relatives — received special legal protections, pathways toward asylum and access to attorneys, work permits and support services. And over eight years, advocates and attorneys have been trying to help the families reunite and recover, traveling to the Guatemala rainforest and remote Honduran villages to inform class members of their rights, and offering them to apply for everything from humanitarian parole to work authorization permits to psychological counseling, benefits meant "to prevent any ongoing harm caused by the initial separation," according to the settlement.

That changed when Trump began his second term. Support for separated families was never encoded by an act of Congress, and soon it started shrinking.

First, funding for legal services temporarily ended. Instead, the Trump administration said it would charge families \$1,000 each to enter or stay in the country. Then, attorneys said, some parents were told to appear for more frequent ICE check-ins, and ordered to wear ankle monitors to record their movements. Many class members lost access to counseling.

By late last year, emails show the government had deported some protected family members even after being told by the ACLU that they were off limits as protected Ms. L class members.

Seven days before Christmas, ACLU attorney Natalie Behr wrote an urgent email to Department of Justice contacts, saying her team had learned that a protected relative was once again in ICE custody.

"We ask that you tell us why we were not notified of this class member's detention within 24 hours. ... this class member should not be removed," Behr wrote.

A Washington DOJ trial attorney emailed back, saying he would ask ICE. ACLU attorneys followed up.

By the day after Christmas, it was already too late. He had been deported.

The problem is still surfacing. While the government is required by judge's orders to immediately tell the ACLU when Ms. L class members are detained and to return re-separated families who have been deported, the Trump administration only disclosed in April that it had deported another protected person to Guatemala back in September, court filings show.

The same thing nearly happened to one of Alva López's neighbors, who was picked up in West Palm Beach a few months after her deportation. The father also had done landscaping near Mar-a-Lago and had been separated at the U.S.-Mexico border in 2017 from his daughter. Under the first Trump administration, he was swiftly returned to Guatemala. As ACLU attorneys and government lawyers hashed out what separated families were due, he came back to Florida in 2021 to reunite with his children, one of whom had been released after spending months in a government detention facility.

In October, the government locked him up, first in Alligator Alcatraz, an immigration detention center in the Florida Everglades, then inside Camp East Montana in Texas, Kribs said.

At Camp East Montana, he was fed moldy food with worms, berated by guards and learned that a fellow detainee died after being mistreated by ICE officials, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of government reprisal. ICE said the detainee died after experiencing "on-site medical distress," and the El Paso medical examiner's office later ruled the detainee experienced "asphyxia due to neck and torso compression." Christmas and New Year's Eve came and went, and by January he found it hard to keep up his hopes when his children called.

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The ACLU filed a motion about Ms. L parents being detained, and the father was released from government detention in April. While he's grateful to be back home in Florida with his children, he told AP he feels like he is still being tracked through his ankle monitor and the ICE check-ins he's required to do every two weeks. His children still worry he won't be there when they get out of school, he said.

Bis said DHS could impose conditions on parole, including electronic monitoring, regular reporting requirements, and even detention."

'A place where we can all be safe'

Sinri Baltazar, a mother from Honduras who was first separated from her then-5-year-old daughter in 2018, also was allowed under a judge's order in April to return to Louisiana with her three children, including her youngest, a U.S. citizen.

It has not been easy. Baltazar, a member of the Afro-indigenous Garifuna community that faces discrimination in Honduras, was deported with her children last year after she said immigration officials told her to sign a document they said would permit her to keep her family together — only if they all left. Back in New Orleans, she said she was grateful her children could seek a better life, but they have been struggling to get by while living with an acquaintance from church.

"The only thing my children say is that they want to be home, in their own house," Baltazar said. "I'm just trying to get us to a place where we can all be safe, and I hope for that for all the other families."

As deportations have risen in the last year and a half, attorneys say separated families have become increasingly fearful about filling out government paperwork and many don't know they can apply for asylum, a key benefit of the settlement that expires in December. The administration also hasn't said whether it will extend a current, trimmed-back legal services contract for families that ends in August. Another deadline is looming as well: thousands of separated families need to request for any pending removal orders to be cancelled by December, or lose their ability to stay in the U.S. legally.

"There was never enough funding to keep up with the need," said Anilú Chadwick, an attorney and senior director at the legal nonprofit Together & Free, which she said has supported 15 families that have been re-separated, including Baltazar's. "Now we have to see if the government awards a new contract, and I gotta say as someone who has been on the clock to find and locate services, that is not enough time even in the best of circumstances."

For separated families who are waiting for loved ones to be released from detention, or for paperwork to return to the U.S., however, time has been moving at a glacial pace.

Ever since Alva López was deported back to Guatemala nearly a year ago, she checked her phone each morning for word of when she and her children could return. Money started drying up. The children began forgetting their English slang. Briseidy, now 14, worried she would drift away from her American friends. Finally, two weeks ago, there was news: the government would bring her and her children back to Florida on an American Airlines flight, under a judge's order.

The puppies she had bought Ederson to lighten his mood had died, and there were few friends and relatives to say goodbye to. So she packed up the siblings and their few possessions, their clothes now loose on their frames after losing weight since returning to Todos Santos Cuchumatán.

And finally, in the last week of May, passports and travel documents in hand, the family flew to Miami. Ederson said it felt like a miracle. But soon after landing, immigration officials pulled Alva López in for questioning, taking her photo and fingerprints all over again and re-examining every document she held. Their stay in the U.S. may be short. An immigration official granted her just two weeks' humanitarian parole.

The government declined to comment specifically on Alva López's case.

"I still haven't told the children" about the two weeks' parole, Alva López said the first day she woke up back in the family's old neighborhood in West Palm Beach. "They're going to worry that the same thing will happen again," she said.

Takeaways from the AP's report on children who have been separated from their parents a second time

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By GARANCE BURKE and SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

In 2018, when he was just 3 years old, Ederson Galicia Alva was taken from his mother's arms at the U.S.-Mexico border under the first Trump administration's family separation policy and kept apart from her in a government facility for months. They were finally reunited after lawyers intervened. Then, in June of last year, he and his mother were separated a second time and ultimately sent back to Guatemala, despite legal protections meant to keep them and families like theirs together.

After nearly a year in the indigenous highlands of Guatemala, Ederson's family was finally allowed to return to Florida last week, following a federal judge's order that the government had acted illegally.

Now, eight years since President Donald Trump's forcible border separations triggered global outrage and came to an official halt, an Associated Press investigation has found that the government has re-separated dozens of children from their families, despite a landmark legal settlement meant to keep them together. Some of their parents have been locked in immigration detention facilities for months, and others deported back to their home countries after being taken from their families once again. In some cases, immigration officials conducting interior sweeps deported people despite discovering they were legally off limits for removal, according to emails obtained by AP.

Here are highlights from the AP's reporting:

Separations under Trump's second term

Trump's second administration has vowed to deport more than 1 million people per year. Federal agents have been plucking people from their communities so swiftly that, according to the Brookings Institution, now the parents of tens of thousands of children have been detained.

Family separations often look different from Trump's first term. In 2018, Ederson and other children at the border were forcibly taken from their parents, who were jailed separately and charged criminally with illegal entry. Then, the government was unable to reunite them for months because adults and children's information was kept in different computer systems. A judge barred the government from separating families at the border and ordered the government to bring the families back together after the ACLU filed a class action lawsuit. Later, a court settlement banned most family separations to deter immigration until December 2031.

Today, if parents are arrested or deported under the president's push for mass deportations, they are being made to choose whether to leave their children behind in the United States.

What does the government say?

"DHS complies with all court orders, even as radical NGOs shop for the most favorable forum and activist judges seek to thwart our operations," acting Assistant Secretary Lauren Bis, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson, said in response to AP requests for comment about the government's policies toward separated families.

Government attorneys have argued in recent court filings that there are no legal restrictions on "the government's statutory authority to execute orders of removal." Bis said enforcing immigration law was "not optional," and that "every removal of an illegal alien helps restore order and reinforce the rule of law."

Ederson's family recently was allowed to return, but their status is still on shaky ground.

In late 2017, immigration officials began forcibly separating parents and children at the U.S.-Mexico border, under a policy championed by Stephen Miller, Trump's then-senior policy advisor and now White House deputy chief of staff. ACLU filed a class action lawsuit in February 2018 to halt the practice called *Ms. L v. U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement*, on behalf of a Congolese mother the Trump administration separated from her 7-year-old daughter. It wasn't until thousands of families were torn apart that a judge ordered the government to end separations, saying it caused "lasting, excruciating harm." According to ACLU's most recent accounting, the number of separated parents and children, and their impacted family members covered by the settlement is far greater than previously reported—over 11,800—and because the government deported so many people before the practice was banned, the full scope may never be known. The ACLU also provided AP with new data surrounding *Ms. L* class members who have been detained and deported during the second Trump administration.

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Under a 2023 settlement agreement, Ms. L class members — including separated parents, children and other close relatives — got special legal protections, pathways toward asylum and access to attorneys, work permits and support services. And for eight years, advocates and attorneys tried to help the families reunite and recover, and offered them everything from job placement to psychological counseling, benefits meant “to prevent any ongoing harm caused by the initial separation,” according to the settlement.

As deportations have risen in the last year and a half, attorneys say many separated families have become more fearful about filling out government paperwork and don’t know they can apply for asylum, a key settlement benefit that expires in December. The administration also hasn’t said if it will extend a current, trimmed-back legal services contract for families that ends in August. Another deadline is looming as well: thousands of separated families need to request for any pending removal orders to be cancelled by December, or lose their ability to stay in the U.S. legally.

Each morning since Alva López was deported back to Guatemala last June, she has checked her phone for word of when her family could return. Money started drying up. The children began forgetting their English slang. Briseidy, now 14, worried she would drift away from her American friends. Finally, two weeks ago, there was news: the government would bring her family back to Florida on an American Airlines flight, under a judge’s order.

At the end of May, passports and travel documents in hand, the family flew to Miami. Ederson said it felt like a miracle. But soon after landing, immigration officials began questioning Alva López, taking her photo and fingerprints once again and picking apart her documents. Their stay in the U.S. may be short. An immigration official granted her just two weeks’ humanitarian parole.

The government declined to comment specifically on Alva López’s case.

“I still haven’t told the children” about the two weeks’ parole, Alva López said on her first day back in her old West Palm Beach neighborhood. “They’re going to worry that the same thing will happen again.”

Jalen Brunson scores 30 and Knicks finish on 11-0 run, steal Game 1 from Spurs with 105-95 win

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The New York Knicks’ winning streak lives on, and they struck first in the NBA Finals.

Jalen Brunson scored 30 points, Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 18 points and 12 rebounds, and the Knicks erased a 14-point second-half deficit to beat the San Antonio Spurs 105-95 in Game 1 of the finals on Wednesday night.

OG Anunoby had 17 points for New York — which has won 12 consecutive playoff games, the seventh team to have such a streak in NBA history, and is the third to do it in a single season. Brunson scored 13 points in the fourth, only six fewer than San Antonio managed as a team in that quarter, and sealed it with a spinning jumper while falling to the court with 38 seconds left.

“He’s a gamer, man,” Knicks coach Mike Brown said. “In the biggest moments, he shows up. That’s what MVPs are supposed to do.”

And the Knicks, who finished on an 11-0 run, made a little more history. They became the first team to beat San Antonio in a Game 1 of the title series — the Spurs were 6-0 in those — and this is also the first time the Spurs have trailed a finals before the finish.

As far as single-season playoff winning streaks — Golden State won 15 straight games in the 2017 postseason on its way to the title. San Antonio won 12 straight in 1999 on its way to the title. And now New York has won 12 in a row, with its title status to be determined.

“I think we know what we have to do,” Brunson said. “I think we’re a pretty together group.”

Victor Wembanyama had 26 points and 12 rebounds for the Spurs, but he shot 6 for 21 from the field in his finals debut. Stephon Castle scored 17, while Julian Champagnie and Dylan Harper each had 16 for San Antonio.

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"I was bad tonight," Wembanyama said. "It's not more complicated than that."

Game 2 is Friday in San Antonio.

Former San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich was at the game, as he's been for every finals game in Spurs history, albeit watching from a suite and not stomping the San Antonio sideline. The Spurs legends — David Robinson, Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobili, Bruce Bowen and more — were there, too.

So were Knicks great Patrick Ewing and the world's most recognizable New York fans: Spike Lee, Tracy Morgan, Ben Stiller, Fat Joe, Timothée Chalamet and more. Plenty of non-celeb Knicks fans made the trip as well; Tommy Sherlock, a auto sales manager from Brooklyn, said it cost less for two Game 1 tickets in San Antonio, with hotel and airfare, than Game 3 tickets in New York would have set him back.

"First-class air, too," Sherlock said. "By a lot."

The Knicks led 14-7 early, the Spurs answered with a 20-13 run to go up by 10, the Knicks rallied and the second quarter saw six lead changes before San Antonio took a 55-48 lead into the break.

San Antonio pushed the lead to 14 midway through the third quarter before the Knicks stormed back, finishing the period on a 22-9 run and sending the game into the fourth tied at 76.

New York's lead was eight midway through the final period. Wembanyama made a pair of free throws with 2:16 left to put San Antonio up 95-94, but Brunson made a corner 3 on the next possession to put the Knicks on top for good.

"I think we let that one go," Wembanyama said.

San Antonio's run of never trailing the finals had some close calls over the years. The Spurs were tied twice with New Jersey in 2003 finals, tied with Detroit twice in 2005, tied with Miami three times in 2013 — they lost that series in seven games, so they only trailed when it was over — and then were tied with the Heat once more in 2014.

It's only 1-0. But the Knicks are only three wins away from their first title in 53 years, and they just took home-court advantage away from San Antonio.

"We have a long way to go," Brunson said.

Ahead of papal visit, Spain pushes forward with reparations for church sex abuse victims

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — In the 1970s, in a devoutly Catholic Spain still ruled by dictator Francisco Franco, Paula Alonso-Pimentel was sent for catechism at age 8 to a religious school in the northern city of Valladolid.

There, she says, a Marist priest sexually abused her for a year in the school's vestibule, placing her on his knees and lifting her skirt as students passed in and out. More than 50 years later, she is seeking reparations.

Spain's long-delayed reckoning with sexual abuse within the Catholic Church entered a new phase this year with the launch of a reparations program for cases like Alonso-Pimentel's that involve accused clergy members who have died and whose alleged crimes are too old to be prosecuted.

The Spanish bishops conference and Spain's government approved the program months before Pope Leo XIV's planned visit starting Saturday to the once overwhelmingly Catholic nation of 50 million people. Notably, it gives the government the final word on payouts. Across the world, clergy sexual abuse and cover-up scandals have rocked Catholic dioceses, damaging the Church's reputation and challenging the popularity of popes more than three decades after the crisis first erupted publicly in the West.

In Spain, some victims have been reassured; others remain skeptical, arguing that the window for reparations claims is too short and questioning whether it can succeed without enforceable, transparent payments.

The program gives victims a year to apply. So far, 420 people have done so. It follows years of controversy after newspaper El País revealed the scope of alleged abuse amid the church's silence, as well as criticism of the church's own attempt to compensate victims.

Alonso-Pimentel shares some skepticism, but hopes the abuse she has spent decades trying to overcome will finally be addressed.

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"It must cost them, the Church," she said. "It must cost them because this cannot come for free. It cannot be that they can continue doing it without paying a huge price."

The Associated Press does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly, as Alonso-Pimentel has done.

For years, she buried the memories. With time, she spoke about the abuse to friends, partners, psychologists and eventually to others who also said clergy had abused them.

After Pope Francis convened a global summit in 2019 on clerical abuse, Alonso-Pimentel wrote to the Marist order in Valladolid, seeking details about the priest she says abused her. All she received was his name. Following a brief period of communication, she felt mistrustful and cut off contact.

When the Spanish church launched its own extrajudicial program for abuse victims in prescribed cases, she did not apply, deterred by the institution's attitude. Alonso-Pimentel hopes the new church-state model will be more equitable.

"I'm going to submit my report no matter what," she said, "but I also want to see how they work."

The new system calls for Spain's ombudsman to review each case through an independent team of experts and propose compensation, whether symbolic, psychological or economic, that the church will then assess.

If no agreement is reached, the case will go to a joint committee with representatives from the church, the ombudsman's office and victims groups. If that committee can't agree, the ombudsman has the final word.

The long path to a deal

With El País' creation in 2018 of a database of clergy sexual abuse cases, Spain began confronting a legacy of abuse by priests and cover-up by generations of bishops and religious superiors. It did so later than other Western countries, including the United States, Ireland and Australia.

As the database grew, so did public outrage, with Spain's ombudsman tasked by Parliament to investigate how widespread the issue was. In 2023, the ombudsman delivered a damning 800-page report estimating there were hundreds of thousands of possible victims of church sexual abuse in Spain over decades — based on a survey of 8,000 people. The report also examined 487 known cases.

Spain's bishops rejected the estimate, saying its own investigation had uncovered 728 sexual abusers within the church since 1945. Most of the crimes occurred before 1990, the bishops' conference said, and 60% of the alleged perpetrators were now dead.

In 2024, the bishops unilaterally created a system to assist victims on a case-by-case basis. It came months after the Spanish government announced its intention to force the church to compensate victims, accusing the church of minimizing the problem. It said the church's in-house system was ineffective in part because it lacked outside oversight.

For that reason, many victims, including Alonso-Pimentel, said they didn't want to directly approach the church.

You can't be a judge and a jury in your own case, Alonso-Pimentel said. "It's as simple as that."

Earlier this year, the bishops conference said it had paid around 2 million euros (\$2.3 million) to victims, but understood some victims' discomfort. It acknowledged the utility of the new state-church model.

"It's opening a new door for the process that the church has already been developing for the past two years," said Josetxo Vera, the conference's communications director.

The Vatican has grown more explicit about compensating sexual abuse victims. In Leo's first encyclical, he wrote that listening to victims of sexual abuse included "acknowledging the harm done" and "just reparation."

Even so, Spain's bishops have long denied that clerical abuse is systemic, pointing out that more sexual crimes take place outside the church.

"We believe that, indeed, human nature is flawed, that it has a propensity for evil, and that it needs a great deal of reconciliation and forgiveness. But I can't say that it's a systemic issue," said Vera. "We are part of this society. We share some of its virtues, and we also share some of its vices and crimes."

Some worry the new program shares weaknesses with the church's

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Other victims and advocates worry that Spain's new plan still won't be strong enough. A key concern: there is no scale for reparations based on the severity of the abuse, with the church and government agreeing to evaluate cases on an individual basis. Also, it isn't legally binding.

"I see this protocol actually as being quite fragile," said Anne Barrett Doyle, co-director of Bishop Accountability, a Boston-based nonprofit that researches child abuse by priests and the management of those cases by bishops, religious orders and the Vatican. "It has a very short time frame. It has no matrix to establish minimum awards for various categories of injuries. So will it be fair? Will it be consistent?"

Ahead of Leo's visit, Spanish activist Miguel Hurtado has cited his own abuse case to highlight its potential weaknesses.

More than two decades ago, Hurtado says that a monk named Andreu Soler sexually molested him when he was a 16-year-old Boy Scout in a group led by Soler at the Montserrat Abbey, an 11th-century Benedictine monastery in the mountains outside Barcelona.

Initially, the monastery persuaded his parents not to report the alleged abuse to authorities, Hurtado said. He tried moving on with his life. But as Hurtado observed the reckoning around clerical abuse taking place years later, he went public with his accusations, including to *El País*.

The Montserrat Abbey, through an independent report in 2019, acknowledged multiple cases of sexual abuse committed by Soler over decades. But Hurtado said it did not assume any responsibility to formally compensate victims "because everything is time-barred, both criminally and civilly."

Questioned by the AP, the monastery declined to comment on Hurtado's case or whether it will cooperate with other cases that could emerge through the new reparations system.

Hurtado said he is disappointed that Leo will visit the monastery despite the abuse allegations, which he has detailed to the Vatican and other church authorities.

He fears the new system could leave many victims in the dark.

"The problem is that it's built on sand," Hurtado said.

Ukraine's drone strikes set a gloomy tone for Putin's economic showcase

By JAMES JORDAN and HARRIET MORRIS Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (AP) — A massive black cloud rising above the St. Petersburg skyline from a Ukrainian drone strike set a gloomy tone for the opening of President Vladimir Putin's annual showcase of Russia's economic achievements.

With Putin set to arrive Thursday in his hometown that is hosting the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, the Ukrainian attack a day earlier that set an oil terminal ablaze was another embarrassing blow to his efforts to minimize the impact of the 4-year-old conflict and cast it as a distant event with no effect on Russian daily life.

The attack, which also targeted a naval base near Russia's second-largest city on the Gulf of Finland, underlined Ukraine's growing capability to hit deep inside its neighbor and demonstrated that even the heavily protected city where Putin was born is increasingly vulnerable.

Scores of flights were delayed or diverted at St. Petersburg's airport and authorities cut cellphone internet service to try to prevent drone attacks.

Putin had scaled down Russia's annual Victory Day parade on May 9, fearing Ukrainian drone strikes. Days later, a massive drone attack on Moscow's suburbs killed three and showed the capital's vulnerability.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia's forces were pressing inside Ukraine "in order to prevent such attacks" like the one on St. Petersburg. He noted that "systematic" strikes on Kyiv that Russia threatened last week are underway.

On Tuesday, Russia hit Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles, killing 23 and wounding 151 others.

Putin has used the forum to showcase his country's economic advances and encourage foreign investment. Often styled as the Russian version of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, it usually

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draws tens of thousands of delegates from around the world.

While Western officials and business people have stayed away from the forum after Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, Russia has sought to attract more guests from other regions to underline its declared goal of promoting a "multipolar world."

Saudi Arabia, which is a special guest this year, has sent a large delegation. The presidents of Uzbekistan and Tanzania and China's vice president also are attending. A U.S. official, Rodney Mims Cook Jr., head of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, will attend the event for the first time in years.

Russia's economic outlook has clouded as the initial boost from massive military spending has fizzled. The government has raised taxes and increased domestic borrowing to keep its budget deficit under control.

Putin is expected to minimize Russia's economic problems during his forum appearance, but the Ukrainian attack on St. Petersburg's port about 15 kilometers (about 9 miles) from the forum's venue have underlined the growing challenges posed by the conflict.

Hours before the forum opened Wednesday, Ukrainian drones also hit the Kronstadt naval base on an island in the Gulf of Finland, the home of Russia's Baltic Fleet since Peter the Great founded St. Petersburg. While most of the fleet has moved to Russia's Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad, Kronstadt retains its symbolic importance as the seat of the country's naval glory, with its historic cathedral and old fortifications.

AI companies are barreling toward huge Wall Street debuts. A look at the biggest players

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Some of the leading artificial intelligence companies are moving toward initial public offerings this year at eye-popping valuations. From Anthropic to SpaceX to OpenAI, tech giants are looking to take their shares public to access more capital in the race to shape the technology's future.

The amount of money involved in building and maintaining artificial intelligence models, the pursuit of artificial general intelligence that can surpass humans at many tasks, and widespread AI adoption all have led to an air of excitement around the technology that has helped lift the stock market to record highs.

"These companies are now burning through cash to win the AI race, and public equity is the cheapest source available, particularly in a rising interest rate environment," said Michael Field, chief equity analyst at Morningstar.

But amid the billions — even trillions — at stake, worries about an AI bubble are looming in the background. Some experts fear tech companies and venture capitalists are pouring too much money into a still-nascent and unproven technology.

For now, though, the market shows no signs of a slowdown. Here's a look at some of the biggest AI-focused companies.

SpaceX

Elon Musk's SpaceX was valued at \$800 billion last year, but its value grew to \$1.25 trillion after the space exploration company merged in February with Musk's artificial intelligence company, xAI. Now, SpaceX plans an IPO that could become one of the biggest stock sales ever — even though the company is currently losing billions of dollars a year. SpaceX lost \$2.6 billion from operations last year on \$18.7 billion in revenue, according to a May regulatory filing, and the losses kept piling up at the start of this year. xAI, which features the Grok chatbot, lost \$6.4 billion in operations last year, according to a company document.

Musk got SpaceX to buy xAI earlier this year despite protests from some SpaceX investors that it was a bailout and unethical given that he was a controlling shareholder in both.

SpaceX said on Wednesday it plans to raise up to \$75 billion when it goes public this month, setting the stage for the largest-ever stock market debut and putting Musk on course to becoming the world's first trillionaire. An offering of that size would easily break the record for the largest IPO, which was set by Saudi Aramco in 2019 when the oil giant went public and raised \$26 billion.

Anthropic

Anthropic, the maker of the Claude chatbot, was formed in 2021 by ex-OpenAI leaders. It was recently

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valued at \$965 billion, making it one of the world's most valuable startups. It has been a meteoric rise for what was once a little-known research laboratory. The San Francisco-based company is moving toward going public on Wall Street, announcing June 1 that it has submitted a confidential filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission for a proposed IPO.

Anthropic has said it is making annualized revenue of \$47 billion from selling its technology to people and organizations using Claude to write code and do other work and personal tasks on their behalf.

OpenAI

The maker of ChatGPT began in 2015 as a nonprofit dedicated to developing AI for the common good. It is now a company valued at \$852 billion planning an IPO as soon as this fall.

While OpenAI may have helped set off the current AI boom, Anthropic's meteoric rise and Claude's growing popularity have left the ChatGPT maker playing catch-up.

In an unsuccessful lawsuit against OpenAI and its top executives, Elon Musk, an OpenAI co-founder, claimed the company diverted from its founding mission to make more money. OpenAI had countered that Musk was simply seeking a bigger slice of the company. OpenAI has not yet reported filing initial IPO paperwork with the SEC.

Several AI heavyweights are already public companies

Google designed the Gemini AI assistant in response to a competitive threat posed by OpenAI's ChatGPT, which came out in late 2022. Gemini AI models are integrated into Google search and other products such as Maps. The market value of Alphabet, Google's Mountain View, California-based parent company, was \$4.54 trillion at the beginning of June, up from \$2.3 trillion a year earlier. That growth is a sign that Alphabet's spending spree on AI is producing dividends so far, despite investor worries about some of its peers' massive AI investments.

Meta's AI push has meant integrating its assistant, Llama, into all aspects of its business, including advertising and consumer-facing tools such as a digital assistant that can help with daily tasks, as well as image and video creation. Unlike many rival models, Llama is open source, meaning it is largely available to the public and to developers. Meta AI is available as a standalone app and it is integrated into the Menlo Park, California-based company's smart glasses. Meta's market value as of early June was \$1.55 trillion, down from \$1.76 trillion a year earlier amid investor concerns about the company's massive AI spending.

Microsoft, which went public 40 years ago, likely would have been running behind in the AI race were it not for a timely multibillion-dollar investment in OpenAI. Microsoft provided the computing power and financial backing that helped OpenAI build ChatGPT. In turn, Microsoft was able to use the same technical foundation to power its own AI assistant, now called Copilot. The once-exclusive partnership has since evolved as both companies look to other partners to advance their AI ambitions.

With Trump in a holding pattern on Iran war, allies and critics worry he risks getting boxed in

By AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is facing warnings from foes and allies alike that he's getting boxed in on the Iran war, a conflict he sold as a brief military incursion but that has since settled into a holding pattern.

It's been nearly a week since U.S. and Iranian negotiators reached a tentative agreement to extend the ceasefire in the conflict by 60 days and start a new round of talks on Iran's nuclear program that required Trump's sign off.

But Trump has called for unspecified changes to the agreement and Iranian officials — perhaps calculating that the Republican president is reluctant to restart the bombardment after burning through key weapons systems — are showing no signs they'll give in to new demands.

A series of strikes by the U.S. and Iran this week has raised fresh concern that the ceasefire could collapse. Trump on Wednesday downplayed the significance.

"It's a different part of the world," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "You know, I'd say in that

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part of the world, a ceasefire is when you're shooting in a more moderate manner."

The shaky moment follows repeated claims by Trump since a 14-day ceasefire was agreed to on April 7 — following 38 days of U.S. and Israel bombing of Iran — that a deal is just days away and the Iranian side is begging to come to a settlement. Trump on Wednesday said it was possible something could come together "over the weekend."

Without an interim settlement in place to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, global energy prices remain elevated and are adding to anxieties around the world about the impact of rising costs spurred by the three-month conflict on the cost of food, fuel and other goods.

After a string of reports this week that Iran was shutting down talks, Trump told CNBC he "couldn't care less" if the negotiations had bogged down and even mused they had become "boring."

There's anxiety Trump is getting boxed in

There's growing concern inside the administration and among key advisers and allies that Trump now finds himself in a bind, according to a U.S. official and another person familiar with the administration's internal deliberations, both of whom spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

He's buffeted by Democrats seizing on oil prices and warnings from hawkish members of his base that an early exit from the conflict would amount to capitulation.

Trump is privately hearing from other Republican lawmakers as well as Pentagon officials and Gulf allies that a return to the bombing campaign is a bad idea.

Those advising against returning to military action note that the U.S. has burned through munitions at too fast of a rate. It could take three years to replenish some key weapons systems.

Meanwhile, Gulf allies are worried that Iran will retaliate against them and their critical infrastructure and energy interests and further set back their economies.

At the same time, Trump has bristled at the idea of accepting a deal that resembles the 2015 nuclear agreement brokered by Democrat Barack Obama's administration, which restricted Iran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting international economic sanctions.

Trump during his first term abandoned the pact that he said had failed to permanently stop Iran's nuclear program, ignored Iran's ballistic missile development, and did not penalize Iran for supporting militant proxy groups across the Middle East.

Now, Trump, according to those familiar with internal deliberations, has made clear he feels strongly he can't make "a bad deal" and is acutely aware that he's at a moment where he's at risk of tarnishing his legacy if he missteps.

White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly dismissed the notion that Trump has been boxed in or that there's any concern within the administration about the pace of talks.

"These mysterious so-called 'administration officials' have no idea what they're talking about — those actually involved in sensitive discussions know to trust in President Trump, who will always do what is best for U.S. national security," Kelly said in a statement.

Trump resisted Israel push for Lebanon bombings

Israeli and hawkish allies in Washington have made the case to Trump that a deal at this point would amount to unconditional surrender, urging him to ratchet up economic pressure on Iran and back Israel's assault on the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.

But Trump earlier this week in a heated call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded Israel stand down, and on Wednesday, Israel and Lebanon said they agreed to renew a ceasefire. Hezbollah was not part of the Israel-Lebanon talks, which have been held at the ambassadorial level in Washington since the beginning of last month.

Remaining in the current status quo with Tehran — neither a full resumption of hostilities nor sealing an interim agreement to restart nuclear talks — is a situation that Iran appears better poised to exploit, argues Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the hawkish Washington think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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Despite being the weaker party, Iran appears to be calculating that the longer the holding pattern lasts, the better the chances are they can "box in" Trump, he added.

"Either way, Tehran appears more resolute than ever to not provide Trump with a victory image, hence why it isn't budging on the battlefield or negotiating table," Taleblu said.

Holding pattern isn't helpful for Republicans on the ballot

At the same time, Democrats are trying to capitalize on Trump's handling of the unpopular war ahead of November's midterm elections. The House of Representatives on Wednesday for the first time passed a symbolic resolution calling for a halt in military action against Iran, with four Republican lawmakers joining Democrats in the rebuke of Trump's war.

During hours of hearings on Capitol Hill on Tuesday and Wednesday with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Democrats laced into Trump for discounting the economic impact of the conflict on Americans and for failing to anticipate that Iran would shutter the Strait.

In one tense exchange, New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker pointed to the unsteady ceasefire as a sign that Iran has the upper hand.

"We are the strongest nation on the planet Earth, and we're in a stalemate with Iran," Booker said. "And now we're begging to get back into a deal that you all trashed in the first place."

Rubio dismissed the criticism, underscoring that Iran has been placed on its heels with the strikes that have taken out multiple layers of senior leadership and left Iran's economy in shambles.

"There's no one begging," Rubio responded. "I don't know where you're getting this perception that Iran is stronger."

Another Democrat, Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, homed in on Trump's comments last month that voter anxiety about the cost of living was "not even a little bit" of a motivating factor for him to reach a deal to end the war.

The president continues to downplay the rising costs for Americans at the pump and predict that gas prices would fall sharply after the conflict ends.

Christopher Borick, the director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in Pennsylvania, said that Democrats running in swing districts around the country are already zeroing in on Trump's rhetoric on the war's impact on Americans' pocketbooks.

"There's significant risk in having this thing drag on for Republicans," Borick said. "It's certainly going to hurt if Trump ends up in a place where the war ends and Iran's nuclear program is in the same place. But for Republicans in some of these tough swing districts, there's a case to be made to rip the bandage off now, get some easing in the oil markets and hope there's enough time for voters to turn the page."

Trump acknowledges calling Netanyahu 'crazy' and says Israel is complicating peace talks with Iran

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB, MATTHEW LEE, JOSH BOAK and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — President Donald Trump acknowledged criticizing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "crazy" in a phone call that involved expletives, saying he was "a little bit perturbed" that Israel's fighting with Hezbollah militants in Lebanon was holding back peace talks with Iran.

But even as the U.S. president conceded the tensions in an interview released Wednesday, he insisted that his relationship with Netanyahu was solid and that they connected, in part, because they are both "wartime" leaders.

"We've worked very well together. I like Bibi a lot. And I work very well with him," Trump told The New York Post's "Pod Force One."

In an interview on the American business-news channel CNBC, Netanyahu responded that he and Trump sometimes have "tactical disagreements" but have "common goals" and "agree on the main things."

"He respects me. I respect him. We always find a way to work out our differences," the prime minister said.

The president's comments about the Monday call offered a sign of the growing pressure he faces to

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resolve the Iran war as higher energy prices and economic uncertainty threaten Republican prospects in the midterm elections and hamper global commerce.

Talks have dragged on for weeks and have been strained by Israel's broadening war with the Iranian-backed militia group in Lebanon. The conflicts have become increasingly intertwined as Iran insists that any potential truce in the war there must also quell the fighting in Lebanon.

Israel, Lebanon renew ceasefire

Israel and Lebanon agreed Wednesday to renew their fragile ceasefire and create a number of "pilot" security zones inside Lebanon from which Hezbollah militants would be banned.

In a joint statement released after a fourth round of U.S.-mediated talks at the State Department, the two sides said the ceasefire "is contingent on a complete cessation of Hezbollah fire and the evacuation of all Hezbollah operatives" from areas south of the Litani River, which is roughly 30 kilometers (20 miles) north of the northern Israel-Lebanon border. It was not immediately clear how the security zones would be established but the agreement calls for the Lebanese army to take full control of those areas.

"These steps will enable progress towards a comprehensive peace and security agreement," the statement said. "All countries reaffirmed that the future of the relationship between Israel and Lebanon must be decided by the two sovereign governments. They rejected any attempt, by any state or non-state actor, to hold Lebanon's future hostage."

Hezbollah is not part of the Israel-Lebanon talks, which have been held at the ambassadorial level in Washington since the beginning of last month.

"All parties condemned Iran's attacks on countries in the region, and ongoing activities that undermine stability throughout the Middle East, whether through support for proxies and all other acts of aggression," the statement said.

A new round of discussions will be held during the week of June 22 with an eye toward "reaching a comprehensive agreement."

Trump does not commit to timeline for ending Iran war

Trump remained noncommittal about a timeline for settling the Iran conflict, saying the Strait of Hormuz might stay blocked through the Labor Day holiday on Sept. 7. He has insisted that Iran stop any efforts that could lead to a nuclear weapon and that the strait be reopened for shipments of oil and natural gas.

"I don't know. I mean, I think it could be (closed through Labor Day), but I think it's unlikely. I think that we'll have it. I think this will resolve itself fairly quickly," Trump said.

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who succeeded his late father, is "involved" in peace talks, Trump added.

"They have a lot of respect for him," the president said in the interview.

Trump said that Khamenei is not doing well due to wounds sustained in an airstrike, but "they say he's giving approval because that's the way it has been for a long, long time." Khamenei's father was killed in an airstrike when the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran at the end of February.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House for the first time approved a war powers resolution that would halt the U.S. military action against Iran, defying Trump as a handful of Republicans joined with Democrats to end the conflict.

The roll call Wednesday was 215-208, but the next steps are uncertain. Trump would likely reject any measure from Congress to limit his commander-in-chief authority.

Path to a lasting ceasefire in Lebanon is obscured by new strikes

The path toward a lasting ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah remained unclear as hostilities continued in Lebanon.

An Israeli strike Wednesday hit a car on a busy highway just south of Beirut. The strike in Khaldah came without warning, and it was not immediately clear if the person targeted was killed.

Israel and Lebanon on Monday reached a U.S.-brokered agreement in which Israel would not strike Beirut's southern suburbs and Hezbollah would end its attacks on northern Israel.

The agreement was made hours after Israel announced that it was going to launch strikes across the

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sprawling urban neighborhoods near the Lebanese capital in what would have been the most intense strikes since a nominal ceasefire went into effect on April 17.

Lebanon hopes to widen the scope of the ceasefire so it becomes comprehensive across the country. Israel wants to disarm Hezbollah immediately before the Israeli military ends its operations in Lebanon and withdraws its troops from dozens of villages and towns.

Israeli military warning rattles coastal city

Israeli strikes over southern Lebanon continued, especially in and around the battered cities of Tyre and Nabatiyeh. Two overnight strikes near Tyre, a coastal city, killed four Syrians and two Palestinians.

Israel warned the Christian neighborhoods in Tyre that Hezbollah members were among them. Many Lebanese Shiite Muslims fled to those areas in recent days because they were spared from the aerial bombardment along the Mediterranean coast.

After the warning, the Lebanese army deployed to the Christian district of Tyre in an effort to prevent Israeli attacks there and to show that Hezbollah has no armed presence in the area.

Israel launched an invasion of southern Lebanon days after the latest war was sparked on March 2, when Iran-backed Hezbollah fired rockets toward northern Israel in solidarity with Iran. Israeli troops have pushed deeper into Lebanon over the past week, as Hezbollah continues to claim rocket and drone attacks.

The latest round of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has killed 3,468 people in Lebanon and displaced 1.2 million people. According to Netanyahu's office, at least 27 Israeli soldiers and a defense contractor have been killed in or near southern Lebanon. Two civilians have also been killed in northern Israel.

Strike on village kills most of a family

Many residents of southern Lebanon remained in villages near the hostilities or returned to areas where strikes occurred after evacuation warnings.

The Al-Abdallah family returned to their home in Marwaniyeh, which they left because they thought the village was unsafe following earlier strikes. A day later, two rockets hit the home, bringing down the three-story building and killing six family members, said the brother of Hassan Al-Abdallah, who was killed.

Ahmed Al-Abdallah, 13, was thrown away from the building by the force of the blasts and was the only member of his family to survive. His uncle, Eissa Al-Abdallah, said the boy has two broken legs and shrapnel wounds all over his body.

"What good is talking now? They are gone, and nothing will bring them back," the uncle told The Associated Press in a phone call Tuesday. "This land costs blood."

President Trump says he will nominate Todd Blanche to serve as attorney general

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he will nominate Todd Blanche to serve as attorney general, tapping his former personal lawyer who has aggressively pursued the Republican president's agenda while leading the Justice Department in an acting role.

Trump said at a dinner at the White House that he plans to nominate Blanche formally on Thursday, according to a video of the event posted on social media by a White House aide.

"We are going to make him permanent attorney general," Trump said at the Rose Garden event.

Blanche sought quickly to position himself as the favorite for the permanent job after Pam Bondi's firing in April, accelerating investigations into Trump foes and announcing a nearly \$1.8 billion fund meant to compensate the president's allies for alleged political persecution. The proposed fund created a bipartisan firestorm that forced the Justice Department to scrap the idea earlier this week in an extraordinary about-face.

Blanche was brought into the Justice Department as deputy attorney general and was elevated after Bondi's ousting over her failed efforts to prosecute Trump's perceived political opponents. Blanche insisted he wasn't auditioning for the permanent post but made clear through splashy moves since taking the reins his intent on proving his loyalty to Trump.

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Blanche's actions have outraged Democrats and other critics who accuse him of still acting like Trump's personal lawyer to carry out the president's campaign of retribution. The \$1.776 billion "Anti-Weaponization Fund" also prompted backlash from Republicans in the Senate whose support Blanche will now need in order to be confirmed as attorney general.

While Blanche has maintained he feels no pressure from the president, the Justice Department under his watch has advanced its pursuits of longtime Trump foes. Blanche has strongly rejected accusations that the Trump administration has politicized the Justice Department and has said he is focused on correcting what he contends were past abuses by the Biden administration.

Former FBI Director James Comey was indicted in April over a social media photo of seashells arranged on a beach that officials said constituted a threat to the president. Comey, who has slammed the case as politically motivated, has said he wouldn't be surprised if the Justice Department pursues additional indictments against him.

Blanche separately appointed Joseph diGenova, an 81-year-old former Justice Department prosecutor from the Reagan administration, to oversee a Florida-based investigation into whether former law enforcement and intelligence officials conspired over the last decade to undermine Trump.

He came under intense scrutiny last month over the proposed "Anti-Weaponization Fund," which the administration said was meant to compensate people who feel they've been unjustly investigated and prosecuted under past administrations. The fund sparked outrage over the possibility that violent offenders who participated in the Jan. 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol riot could be considered for payments — which Blanche refused to publicly rule out.

Blanche told lawmakers on Tuesday the Justice Department would not move forward with the plan after the political blowback stalled legislation to fund Trump's immigration enforcement agencies.

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

Kuwait says Iranian drones hit airport and killed 1 as ceasefire is tested again

By JON GAMBRELL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian drones heavily damaged a passenger terminal at Kuwait's main airport Wednesday, killing one person, wounding dozens and briefly closing the airfield — the latest in back-and-forth attacks by Iran and the U.S. that test a fragile ceasefire.

The strike reinforced the risks to residents and travelers in Gulf countries that had considered themselves relative havens before the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. Iran denied causing the damage.

Talks have dragged on for weeks as mediators seek a more enduring truce in the war, now in its fourth month. They are increasingly strained by Israel's broadening war with Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

A regional official said Iran wanted a separate ceasefire in Lebanon enforced before returning to talks. President Donald Trump said negotiations continue to extend the Iran ceasefire, even as the U.S. launched strikes against military sites on an Iranian island.

"We've been hitting them pretty hard," Trump said when asked by reporters on Wednesday if the ceasefire remains in place. "I'd say in that part of the world a ceasefire is when you're shooting in a more moderate manner."

The fighting in Lebanon has exposed a rift between Israel and the U.S., which is pushing its ally for restraint. In a measure of the friction, Trump acknowledged that he'd called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "crazy" during a phone call earlier this week. Nonetheless, both men say their rapport is solid.

Iran maintains its hold on the Strait of Hormuz — a crucial waterway for the world's oil and natural gas and related products like fertilizer — and the U.S. continues its blockade of Iranian ports. Global fuel prices

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remain high, and the effects of the conflict are felt well beyond the region.

In Washington, House Speaker Mike Johnson said he, Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio huddled for three hours at the White House Monday as Trump worked on "that final piece" of getting commerce flowing. Rubio, meanwhile, faced grilling in Congress over the war and its economic fallout.

An Indian national is killed at Kuwait's main airport

A spokesperson for Kuwait's Defense Ministry, Brig. Gen. Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, said "a number of hostile drones" targeted a passenger building at Kuwait International Airport. It had opened only Monday after a monthslong closure because of the war, which began Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said it didn't fire at the airport, instead claiming without providing any evidence that the terminal was damaged by a U.S.-made interceptor that failed to hit Iranian missiles. U.S. Central Command called the claim false and said on X that Iranian drones made a "deliberate, calculated and unjustified attack" on the airport.

Surveillance footage later released by Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation showed the moment of impact from several angles. In the footage, what appears to be a triangle-shaped, delta-wing drone slams directly into the terminal. Iran long has used such drones in combat, particularly its Shahed drones, which are also used by Russia in its war on Ukraine.

Another photograph from the scene showed a Kuwaiti soldier carrying what appeared to be a small aircraft engine consistent with those used by Iranian drones.

India's Embassy in Kuwait said the person killed was an Indian national. Authorities said 63 were wounded, including passengers and workers, and some suffered serious injuries.

Kuwait's Defense Ministry said it destroyed over a dozen missiles and a similar number of drones from Iran.

The airport partially reopened later, with Kuwait Airways flights resuming at a different terminal, according to civil aviation authorities. No other flights were operating.

The Foreign Ministry said Kuwait will "neither accept nor tolerate" the attacks and was kicking out two Iranian diplomats. Such expulsions are an established means of communicating international ire.

US and Iran say they are retaliating for earlier attacks

The U.S. military said two Iranian missiles fell apart en route to Kuwait and that it "downed multiple drones" targeting American forces in the country.

The military also said U.S. and Bahraini forces intercepted missiles aimed at the Gulf kingdom, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th fleet. Bahrain's Defense Ministry said its military intercepted and destroyed three missiles and a number of drones fired by Iran.

The Revolutionary Guard acknowledged that it targeted the headquarters of the 5th Fleet and U.S. military facilities in another country.

Both the U.S. and Iran said they were retaliating for earlier attacks or attempted ones.

Netanyahu told the American business-news channel CNBC that Iran was "playing with fire," but he said any decision about whether to scale up a military response would rest with Trump. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi declared on X that "any hostile act will be met with an immediate, decisive response."

The U.S. military said it launched strikes on an Iranian military ground control station on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said a telecommunications tower was struck. It called this attack, and others, "acts of aggression" that it said violated the ceasefire.

The war is increasingly tied to Israel's fight in Lebanon

Israeli forces have moved deeper into Lebanon than at any time in over a quarter-century, while Hezbollah has launched rocket and drone attacks. The declared ceasefire in Lebanon is officially in place, and no side has formally withdrawn or declared it over even as attacks continue.

Iran insists that any larger potential truce must quell the fighting in Lebanon. Netanyahu wants to keep the issues separate and is under domestic pressure to strike Hezbollah as he prepares for elections this fall.

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In a podcast interview released Wednesday, Trump confirmed a report that he had called Netanyahu "crazy" Monday in a phone conversation peppered with an expletive. Trump told The New York Post's "Pod Force One" that he was "a little bit perturbed" that Israel's fight with Hezbollah was holding back talks with Iran.

Still, Trump said his relationship with Netanyahu was good, and "we've worked very well together." Netanyahu responded on CNBC that he and Trump sometimes have "tactical disagreements" but have "common goals" and "agree on the main things."

"We always find a way to work out our differences," the prime minister said.

Suspect who took 10 people hostage in California standoff has been shot and killed, police say

By JULIE WATSON, JOHN SEEWER and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

A man was shot and killed by the FBI early Wednesday after taking 10 school employees hostage inside a Southern California office building and warning that he had strapped explosives to himself and some of the hostages, police said.

Authorities stormed the building in downtown Bakersfield overnight, ending a nearly 16-hour standoff during which the suspect tied up half the hostages, police said.

The hostages — employees of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools — were found unharmed inside the building that also houses a bank, Bakersfield Assistant Police Chief Jeremy Blakemore said.

"Throughout the night, their families questioned whether or not they would be seen again but we are very grateful for the outcome," Blakemore said during a news conference Wednesday.

Anthony Scott Searles-Harris, 41, was shot and killed around 4:20 a.m., according to Sid Patel, special agent in charge in the FBI's Sacramento office. Authorities said he was an Army veteran who was dishonorably discharged, had a history of trouble with law enforcement and was a registered sex offender.

Searles-Harris was armed with explosives and barricaded himself within the second floor of the building, where the county's superintendent of schools' office is located, according to law enforcement. Authorities were testing the devices Wednesday, but Patel said they do not appear to be a concern.

One of the hostages was able to communicate with law enforcement using her phone until her battery died, Patel said. She was diabetic and didn't have her medicine so officials knew she was at risk, he said.

"I'm sure there'll be mental scars that they're living with, and we'll have our victim specialist to help them," Patel said.

While authorities declined to discuss details about how they ended the standoff or the motive behind it, Blakemore said some of the demands Searles-Harris made involved asking for materials from an earlier case.

"He had concerns related to how his previous case had been handled and what the aftermath of that was, the sentencing and those kinds of things," Blakemore said, without specifying details.

California Department of Justice and court records show Searles-Harris was on the state's sex offender registry due to convictions in 2014 for sexual crimes related to a child under 14 years of age. Those records show he was released from prison in 2018.

Defense attorney Arturo Revelo said he represented Searles-Harris in that case and described him as a disturbed man who believed the government was out to get him.

He said police asked him to help Tuesday during the hostage situation, but he was never allowed to talk to Searles-Harris and instead had to make two videos saying he was there with the case's documents and would assist him in anyway he could.

Revelo said he was told that Searles-Harris would let the hostages go in exchange for the documents but he did not see that happen while he was there.

FBI officials said Searles-Harris served about a year in the Army before being dishonorably discharged in 2007 for going AWOL.

Court records in Kern County, California, show Searles-Harris filed a petition to prevent domestic violence, and was involved in divorce proceedings that began in 2009 and note a young child, as well as a fight for

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guardianship years later in which he was listed as an objector.

During the news conference, Blakemore said he was aware of videos Searles-Harris had apparently posted criticizing the sheriff's office and claiming he was innocent of his previous sex crimes convictions. He said the videos were being reviewed, but the department had no plans to investigate the claims of innocence.

It wasn't clear why Searles-Harris targeted the school district office.

"What unfolded was undoubtedly a terribly frightening and unsettling experience, and the composure our employees demonstrated throughout the 16-hour ordeal was extraordinary," John Mendiburu, the county schools superintendent, said in a statement.

The standoff began early Tuesday afternoon, when officers responded to a call of a bomb threat at the Chase Bank building, a four-story office building with dark-tinted glass windows in Bakersfield, a city of about 380,000 residents about 100 miles (160 kms) northeast of Los Angeles.

The police department's crisis negotiation team talked with Searles-Harris by phone, and he released two hostages Tuesday.

Authorities evacuated buildings nearby, including City Hall and the police headquarters that are just a block away.

More than 100 FBI personnel assisted, including two SWAT teams, bomb technicians and crisis negotiation teams, Patel said. A hostage rescue team was deployed from its headquarters on the East Coast, he said.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent refuses to say whether Trump remains exempt from IRS audits

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent refused to say Wednesday whether President Donald Trump and his family would still get immunity from IRS audits after the administration abandoned plans for a \$1.776 billion compensation fund that would have benefited the president's allies.

"There's continuing litigation, and I'm unable to comment on ongoing litigation," Bessent told lawmakers at the Senate Finance Committee hearing.

It was a frustrating answer for Democratic lawmakers looking to get answers from Bessent at a hearing ostensibly focused on the Treasury Department's budget and came a day after acting Attorney General Todd Blanche seemed to indicate that the portion of the settlement dealing with the IRS audit immunity would still be in effect for the Republican president.

After several failed attempts to get Bessent to answer, Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., said, "It's been very clear you're dodging this and you're trying to use it as an excuse. It's just outrageous on behalf of the American public."

The White House referred the Associated Press to Secretary Bessent's comments in response to an inquiry about the status of the settlement. In the Oval Office on Wednesday, Trump did not confirm whether the compensation fund had been scrapped or was simply on hold. "I'd have to ask the lawyers, I don't know," he told reporters. "As far as I'm concerned, it was a beautiful thing," he said.

The administration decided to scrap plans for the compensation fund, which could have included payouts to participants in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol, after bipartisan outrage and a fierce political backlash that threatened to stall key elements of the White House agenda. Still, the status of the IRS immunity deal as part of the controversial settlement crafted to resolve Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the IRS remained unclear, though Blanche said Tuesday that "nothing has changed" in that regard.

Last week, a federal judge in Florida overseeing Trump's lawsuit against the IRS, who had initially dismissed the case, reopened the case and ordered the president's attorneys to respond to allegations that Trump abandoned his claims to avoid the court's scrutiny of the deal.

When she initially dismissed the case, Kathleen Williams, the judge handling the lawsuit, admonished the Justice Department for a lack of transparency and said no agency "submitted any settlement documents nor filed any documents ensuring that the settlement was appropriate where there was an outstanding question as to whether an actual case or controversy existed."

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Matt Platkin, a former New Jersey attorney general now at the law firm Platkin LLP, which is representing lawmakers and judges challenging the settlement agreement, called it "one of the greatest scams in American history."

He told The Associated Press that Blanche's testimony on Tuesday over plans to scrap the weaponization fund and grant Trump audit immunity "underscores the need for the court to continue its inquiry in Florida."

Lawmakers on Wednesday tried to grill Bessent on the agreement without success.

"Secretary Bessent owes the committee an explanation of what the Treasury knows about the dirty settlement. That's because his department was involved from beginning to end," said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Wyden asked Bessent: "Does the IRS audit immunity given to Trump, his family, and his businesses still stand?"

Bessent declined to answer, citing the unresolved legal dispute.

If audits and examinations into the president's taxes were thrown out under the settlement, an untold figure could be wiped from his bill to the federal tax collector.

Previous reporting from the New York Times and ProPublica shows that a long-standing audit of a technique Trump reportedly used to avoid paying taxes years ago could have resulted in an estimated \$100 million bill if the IRS had found wrongdoing.

Even some Republicans expressed concern on Wednesday over the plan to shield Trump from the IRS.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., speaking to reporters outside the chambers, said, "I don't think any American should have a deal like that."

Nina Olson, founder of the Center for Taxpayer Rights, which has sued the Trump administration over IRS disclosures to immigration enforcement, called the settlement "the lowest point for the IRS since the 1970s and President Nixon's efforts to help his friends by trying to stop IRS audits of them and hurting his enemies by urging IRS audits on them."

SpaceX's IPO is set to be the biggest ever and could make Elon Musk a trillionaire

By ALEX VEIGA and BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — SpaceX says it plans to raise up to \$75 billion when it goes public this month, setting the stage for the largest-ever stock market debut and putting Elon Musk on course to becoming the world's first trillionaire.

The company, formally known as Space Exploration Technologies Corp., said Wednesday it will sell 555.6 million shares at \$135 a piece in an initial public offering. The estimated proceeds would easily top the \$26 billion raised by oil giant Saudi Aramco in 2019. The offering would also give SpaceX a market value of \$1.77 trillion. Only six companies in the S&P 500 are currently worth more, with Nvidia tops at \$5.2 trillion.

Besides the size of the offering and the expected proceeds, SpaceX's amended prospectus updates details about how much control of the company Musk will have. As SpaceX's CEO, chief technical officer and chairman, Musk's voting power will come primarily through his ownership of 5.22 billion Class B shares, which give the holder 10 votes for every share held. According to the filing, Musk would have 82.4% of the voting power in the company.

Forbes currently values Musk's net worth at \$826 billion and his stake in SpaceX at \$542 billion. The estimated value of his SpaceX holdings was based on an overall value for the company of \$1.25 trillion. Based on those numbers, a \$1.77 trillion valuation for SpaceX would boost Musk's net worth by \$223 billion, making him a trillionaire. However, much of Musk's worth is in stock that he has yet to cash in.

Even as it makes a bid for a blockbuster market debut, SpaceX is currently losing billions of dollars a year. The filing shows that the company lost \$2.6 billion from operations last year on \$18.7 billion in revenue, and the losses kept piling up at the start of this year, too.

Fantastical plans

Time will tell how SpaceX fares on the market. Musk's plans for the company are as fantastical as the money he hopes raise in the sale.

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Colorful, even frightening in parts, the IPO document strikes a contrast with the typically dry, technical prose in IPO documents, detailing plans to use proceeds from the sale to help put men on the moon again and perhaps even Mars. In one section, it talks of a need to build “a permanent human colony” on the red planet with “at least one million inhabitants” as existential threats loom that could consign man to “the same fate as the dinosaurs.”

Musk has almost equally ambitious plans for his other publicly traded company, Tesla. His goal is to transform the maker of electric vehicles into a producer of robotaxis and humanoid robots. Dan Ives of Wedbush Securities wrote in a research note that he expects Tesla and SpaceX to merge next year.

AI plays a key role

Key to the success of both companies — and any merged entity — is artificial intelligence. In its IPO filing, SpaceX says it sees potential revenue from AI of up to \$26.5 trillion. But that depends on another lofty Musk ambition — putting data centers in space, which is not technologically possible at the moment.

Transforming his space company into a primarily AI-focused company will be a challenge for Musk, who started xAI in 2023 with 11 other co-founders who have all since left. Some were recruited away by rivals.

Its main AI product, the chatbot Grok, is “less impressive than anything that we see from any other major player in the space, whether that’s OpenAI, or Anthropic, or (Google’s) Gemini,” said IDC analyst Arnal Dayaratna.

Dayaratna said that doesn’t mean SpaceX doesn’t have potential as a major AI player, thanks in part to its computing partnership with Anthropic and Musk’s recent deal that gave SpaceX the rights to buy AI coding tool Cursor for \$60 billion later this year. Folding in Cursor’s capabilities would give SpaceX access to the coveted business customers now using Anthropic’s Claude or OpenAI’s ChatGPT.

SpaceX plans to use the net proceeds from the IPO to fund the expansion of infrastructure for its AI and rocket businesses, and to beef up the constellation of satellites that power Starlink Mobile, among other investments.

The company plans to list on the Nasdaq under the symbol “SPCX” and could begin trading as soon as the end of next week.

And SpaceX isn’t the only colossal market debut investors are now bracing for. Earlier this week, Anthropic submitted a confidential filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to officially start its own IPO clock.

OpenAI has not yet reported filing the initial SEC paperwork, but an IPO from the ChatGPT maker is widely expected.

“This listing represents the first major test for public markets after years of muted IPO activity with SpaceX paving the way for AI giants Anthropic and OpenAI to follow soon after,” Ives wrote.

House approves war powers resolution to halt military action against Iran, in a rebuke of Trump

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House for the first time Wednesday approved a war powers resolution that would halt the U.S. military action against Iran, defying President Donald Trump as a handful of Republicans joined with Democrats to end the three-month-long conflict that has reordered politics at home and abroad.

House Speaker Mike Johnson had tried to prevent an outcome that would show the mounting opposition to the war, abruptly shutting down floor action two weeks ago when the resolution was on the verge of approval. But displeasure has only grown as the conflict drags on and as Trump struggles to negotiate a plan for peace.

“Enough is enough,” said Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who led the effort.

“It is time for the president to do the right thing,” he said. “The people are tired of suffering because of his war of choice — suffering at the gas pump, suffering at the supermarkets.”

The roll call Wednesday was 215-208, but next steps are uncertain. Trump would likely reject any mea-

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sure from Congress to limit his commander-in-chief authority. Still, the tally, with four Republicans joining Democrats, was a rebuke of the president's war strategy, and cheers erupted in the House chamber.

Opposition to war grows

It's the fourth time the House has tried to curb the U.S. war against Iran. The Senate advanced its own war powers resolution last month when a handful of GOP senators broke ranks with the Republican president in a rare show of political pushback from his party.

Each time Democrats have pushed forward the war powers resolution, the vote tallies have inched higher as political unease with the U.S. war swells. Trump had campaigned for the White House on a promise to end U.S. entanglements abroad and focus more on domestic issues, but the war has shifted attention back to the Middle East.

Johnson insisted Trump is "laser focused" on the domestic front, particularly ahead of the midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

The speaker said he spent three hours at the White House with the president this week and Trump is calling on allies to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz and resume the flow of commerce.

Since the U.S. joined Israel in launching the Feb. 28 strikes on Iran, Americans have seen gas prices spike at the pumps, adding to inflationary pressure on consumer spending.

Iran has been able to interrupt shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital channel for a large segment of the world's oil, natural gas and related products such as fertilizer.

"We're working on that final piece," said Johnson, R-La. "The entire world has an interest in the Strait of Hormuz being reopened for commerce. That's what he's working on."

While a ceasefire in the conflict was declared in April, it remains uneasy and uncertain. Talks for a more durable end to the fighting have dragged, increasingly complicated by Israel's broadening war with Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. Meanwhile, military strikes between the U.S and Iran continue to flare.

Congress exerts its war powers authority

The war powers resolution from the House would not immediately stop the war, but it would provide a symbolic — if not legal — step against further military action.

The resolution next goes to the Senate, where four Republican senators last month joined Democrats in advancing a similar measure to curtail the U.S. campaign against Iran. The Senate has yet to take a final vote to approve or reject its own war powers resolution.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned Wednesday at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing that the Iranians would think that the administration's "hands are going to be tied" if Congress approved a war powers resolution. He said they would think "we won't be able to do anything to them, so why make a deal?"

It's not the only action Congress is taking in the national security arena as Democrats, in the minority, work to peel off Republican support for measures beyond the war against Iran.

The House also voted Wednesday on another Democratic-led effort, a procedural step toward a measure that would authorize U.S. support for Ukraine's military operations as it battles Russia and would help reconstruct the war-torn country. That vote is expected later this week. The House also expected to consider a war powers resolution to block U.S. action in Lebanon.

While Congress has the authority under the Constitution to declare war, the president also has power as the commander in chief to engage in military action, creating a legal dispute over which branch of government has ultimate say in matters of war and peace. If Senate joins the House to approve the resolution, it could set the stage for a fresh legal test of war powers.

Under the war powers act, the White House has a 60-day window to seek approval from Congress for military action. The administration, however, has indicated that because a ceasefire has been declared in the current conflict in Iran, the hostilities have ceased.

Senate begins voting on funding immigration enforcement after

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Trump's settlement fund is dropped

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, KEVIN FREKING and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republican-led Senate is moving forward with legislation to fund immigration enforcement agencies after forcing the Trump administration to say it will drop its settlement fund for political allies and stripping a separate proposal for White House security from the bill.

The Senate voted 53-46 on Wednesday to begin debate on the roughly \$70 billion bill to fund U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Border Patrol. The legislation was delayed for weeks as Republican senators navigated the various obstacles to passage created by President Donald Trump and the White House, but they are now moving quickly to pass it after paring it back to its original form.

"Right now, the goal is to get the base bill across the finish line," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D.

Still, Republicans will need to find enough votes to beat back multiple amendments that Democrats — and some Republicans — say they will offer to permanently ban Trump's \$1.776 billion settlement fund.

After fierce Republican pushback, acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told House lawmakers at a hearing on Tuesday that "we are not moving forward with the fund, period." But shortly after the Senate voted to move forward with the bill on Wednesday, Trump repeatedly defended the settlement in response to reporters' questions at the White House.

When asked directly whether the fund is dead or just on hold, Trump responded: "I'd have to ask the lawyers, I don't know."

"I love it," Trump said of the settlement. "I think it's so important."

Republicans are using a process called budget reconciliation that enables them to pass the legislation without any Democratic votes, but they must first wade through a long series of amendment votes that could pose problems for the bill. That process is expected to start on Thursday.

Democratic amendments will test GOP unity

Republicans said they felt reassured by Blanche's promises to scrap the fund, which was part of a settlement resolving Trump's lawsuit against the IRS over the leak of his tax returns. GOP senators had revolted and left town two weeks ago after the Justice Department announced the payouts, which could potentially go to participants in the violent Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol and other Trump allies.

Democrats say they want it written into the law.

"It is only a matter of time before Blanche and Trump go back on their word," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., predicted Wednesday morning.

After Trump's comments, Schumer posted on X that "this is EXACTLY why" Democrats would be forcing votes to ban it.

Some Republicans also planned to try and put Blanche's promise in writing. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., has said he will offer an amendment to block any attempt at resurrecting the fund.

"We've got a sufficient number of Republicans who have been very clear they've got concerns there," said Tillis.

Thune said earlier on Wednesday that Blanche's comments were "extremely helpful" and that he thought most GOP senators were satisfied. He said he was working with Tillis and others who have discussed amendments as he tries to ensure he has enough votes for a simple majority in the 53-47 Senate.

"Keep in mind, we've got to keep them all together, make sure we've got 50 votes for it," Thune said.

Money dropped for Trump's ballroom

The legislation was also delayed by the opposition to \$1 billion in security funding for the White House, including for Trump's new ballroom, that was added to the original bill.

Democrats and some Republicans questioned using taxpayer money for the massive project in a time of economic hardship for many voters. Democrats had planned amendments to strip that language, as well.

As various side issues temporarily derailed the legislation, Republicans have said their top priority is passing the ICE and Border Patrol funding that Democrats have blocked for months in protest of the administration's immigration enforcement crackdown.

But success requires GOP unity in the Senate and the House before it can reach Trump.

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Republican House leaders said Wednesday they would like to pass the bill before the end of the week, if the Senate can finish it. House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., said that House leaders were having internal conversations about it.

"We just need to make sure everybody's there," Scalise said.

It was unclear how Trump's comments on the settlement would affect Republicans' votes on the immigration spending bill. In addition to defending the settlement, he also praised the Jan. 6 defendants who could get payouts, saying they had been subjected to "abuse."

Friction between White House, Senate threatens other priorities

Even as Republican senators have strongly defended Trump's agenda, a growing number of them have become frustrated with the president as he ignores what they see as their political needs.

The Justice Department announced the settlement fund just as the Senate had planned to move forward on the immigration spending bill, giving Democrats an opportunity to offer amendments that could divide Republicans in an election year. That came just as Sens. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and John Cornyn of Texas both lost reelection bids after Trump endorsed their primary opponents.

Trump also tapped real estate scion Bill Pulte, head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, to serve as acting director of national intelligence on Tuesday, angering both Republicans and Democrats who said Pulte has no clear national security credentials. The appointment has complicated bipartisan negotiations on revising the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, which expires at the end of next week.

At the same time, an increasing number of Republicans are voting against Trump's war in Iran. The House voted on Wednesday to halt U.S. military action there, following a Senate vote in May to advance its own war powers resolution.

Thune said he wasn't yet sure whether Republicans would be united on the immigration bill.

"We'll find out," he told reporters.

Shia LaBeouf gets probation after pleading guilty to punching bargoers during Mardi Gras

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Actor Shia LaBeouf was sentenced to probation Wednesday after pleading guilty to punching three people outside a New Orleans bar during Mardi Gras.

LaBeouf must attend an alcohol treatment program under the sentence handed down by an Orleans Parish judge, according to Sarah Chervinsky, an attorney for the actor.

LaBeouf, most widely known for his starring roles in 2007's "Transformers" and in 2008's "Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull," had been released on bail following his arrest near the city's historic French Quarter. Video of the Feb. 17 encounter shows a shirtless LaBeouf outside a bar shoving one person to the ground and hitting another person in the face, "causing his nose to possibly dislocate," according to a New Orleans police report. Police said LaBeouf repeatedly used homophobic slurs, including while he was arrested.

LaBeouf pleaded guilty to three counts of simple battery. Orleans Parish Judge Juana Marine-Lombard handed the actor a six month suspended sentence and two years of probation. LaBeouf also must stay away from the victims and the bar.

Chervinsky said LaBeouf wanted "to take accountability for his part in what happened" and called it a "minor Mardi Gras bar tussle." Chervinsky said there was "no evidence it was about bias or prejudice."

Orleans Parish District Attorney Jason Williams said in a statement that his office consulted with the victims to ensure their support before offering LaBeouf the plea deal.

Jeffrey Damnit, a local entertainer whom police identified as Jeffrey Klein, said he was one of the people attacked by LaBeouf. He has said LaBeouf had pushed him from behind at the bar earlier in the night, shouting homophobic slurs and threatening his life.

Damnit's attorney said his client hopes LaBeouf's behavior improves after the actor undergoes substance abuse treatment.

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"In New Orleans we are all equal, we should all feel safe, and we don't treat people different based upon relative fame," attorney Michael Kennedy said.

After LaBeouf was charged in February, a judge ordered him to return to drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Days later, LaBeouf denied having a "drinking problem" in an interview with journalist and YouTuber Andrew Callaghan. LaBeouf said he doubted rehab would help him. He told Callaghan that the issues leading to his aggressive behavior during Mardi Gras were more rooted in "anger and ego" than alcohol.

LaBeouf also said that "big gay people are scary to me."

"When I'm standing by myself and three gay dudes are next to me touching my leg, I get scared," he told Callaghan. "I'm sorry. If that's homophobic, then I'm that."

LaBeouf, who converted to Catholicism a few years ago, has had several run-ins with the law during his career, including a 2017 New York City arrest on suspicion of assault that happened during a livestream.

While on location in Georgia filming "The Peanut Butter Falcon" later that year, he was arrested for public drunkenness and accused of disorderly conduct and obstruction and sentenced to probation.

In 2020, he was charged with misdemeanor battery and petty theft in Los Angeles.

That year, the English singer and actor FKA Twigs, whose legal name is Tahliah Barnett, also filed a lawsuit alleging LaBeouf was physically and emotionally abusive to her during their relationship, which they settled in July.

The actor first gained acclaim as a child for his role on the Disney Channel series "Even Stevens."

Cannons lost underwater during the American Revolution will soon go on display at a Georgia museum

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — A museum in Georgia's oldest city on Wednesday welcomed a truckload of treasures from the earliest period of U.S. history — 17 cannons that experts believe sank to the bottom of the Savannah River during the American Revolution and remained undiscovered for nearly 240 years.

Workers carefully hoisted the big guns one-by-one from the back of a truck and wheeled them inside their new home at the Savannah History Museum, which will put them on display just in time for the Fourth of July celebration of America's 250th birthday.

"They look brand new," said Andrea Farmer, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers archaeologist who was part of the team that researched and preserved the cannons. "They could pretty much be fired if someone wanted to."

The artifacts were discovered in 2021 when a dredge scooping sediment from the riverbed as part of an Army Corps project to deepen Savannah's shipping channel pulled up a cannon in its metal jaws. The crew soon dug up two more.

In the course of just over a year, a total of 19 cannons were hoisted from the location just downstream from Savannah, which is where Georgia was founded in 1733 as the last of Britain's 13 American colonies.

After being pulled from the river, most of the cannons left Georgia for several years to undergo cleaning and preservation work at a Texas lab.

One of the Revolution's bloodiest battles was fought in Savannah

Archaeologists initially assumed the cannons likely dated to the Civil War. But further research indicated they're likely almost a century older and sank during the buildup to the American Revolution's bloody siege of Savannah.

Savannah was under British occupation in the fall of 1779, when colonists planned an attack to retake the city with help from French allies.

When French ships carrying troops were spotted off the Georgia coast, British forces scuttled at least six ships in the Savannah River downstream from the city to block the French vessels.

The land battle that followed was one of the bloodiest of the war. British forces killed nearly 300 colonial fighters and their allies, and wounded hundreds more.

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The Savannah History Museum sits right next to the battlefield. Its staff on Wednesday hoisted the cannons, weighing up to 1500 pounds (680 kilograms) apiece, onto custom display mounts that staffers likened to giant wine racks.

The cannons will be part of a new exhibit on Savannah's role in the American Revolution, which is scheduled to open Fourth of July weekend, said Samantha Moss, the museum's curator.

"Our great team has been prepping for months -- building mounts and planning how we can safely display these very large, very special artifacts," she said.

Cleaning the crusty cannons took years

Each of the iron cannons emerged from the river covered by a thick crust of mud and minerals.

Two were left in that raw state and put on display at the museum. The other 17 were sent to Texas A&M University, which has a lab that specializes in preserving underwater artifacts. Its staff spent years painstakingly cleaning the big guns and coating them in paint and wax to prevent rusting and corrosion.

"A lot of them have scour marks on the side from anchors or dredging, so there's some scarring on the cannons," said Chris Dostal, a professor of nautical archaeology who leads Texas A&M's Conservation Research Lab. "But most of them look pretty exceptional."

Most of the cannons arrived with wooden plugs still sealing their bores, which remained packed with cannonballs and gunpowder charges.

Dostal said radiocarbon dating of the wooden stoppers placed them roughly in the late 1700s. His team shared the cannons' measurements and other details with experts in London, who concluded three of them were very likely forged by the British military.

The rest appeared to be of French design but bore no telltale markings. Dostal said he suspects those guns may have been cast in America around the time of the war.

Other artifacts found with the cannons included pieces of anchors and a portion of a ship's bronze bell. Like the cannons, none of them bore engravings indicating which ship they came from.

That means many details of the cannons' origins remain a mystery.

"You don't have all of the information," Farmer said. "You're trying to piece it together as best as you can."

Takeaways from primaries featuring Spencer Pratt, a missing congressman and a rare Trump setback

By STEVEN SLOAN, STEVE PEOPLES, HUMERA LODHI and SIMRAN PARWANI Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The contours of a premier Senate race took shape in Iowa, while President Donald Trump's endorsement streak ran into a roadblock there.

Democrats chose a nominee for a House race in New Jersey that could decide control of the chamber. But much of the focus was on California, home to Hollywood but not a governor's race packing much star power.

Here are takeaways from primary elections Tuesday in California, Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico and South Dakota.

Iowa Democrats rally behind former Paralympian in marquee Senate race

Democrats stunned by how Trump has remade American politics have spent the past decade debating which type of candidate is best positioned to energize voters and win elections, not moral victories.

Iowa marked the latest stop in this sometimes agonizing conversation.

The party's establishment supported Josh Turek, a state representative who presented a compelling personal biography that included competing for the United States in four Paralympics. State Sen. Zach Wahls offered himself as a more disruptive figure, refusing to back Chuck Schumer of New York as the Senate Democratic leader if he were elected.

Democratic voters united behind Turek, who will face Republican Ashley Hinson in November.

At this point, many of the party's most fractious races are behind them. But Turek's win could be closely watched in Michigan, where one of the last major Democratic primaries will unfold on Aug. 4. Rep. Haley Stevens is emerging as the establishment candidate there vying against state Sen. Mallory McMorrow and

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progressive Abdul El-Sayed.

Both races are important for Democrats increasingly bullish about regaining the Senate majority. To get there, they must retain the open seat in Michigan while looking for pickup opportunities in places such as Iowa.

The results in the fall could have longer-term implications as Democrats look to rebuild their standing in the Midwest, which swung to the Republican president in 2024.

Trump's endorsement streak faces setback in Iowa

In just the past month, the power of Trump's endorsement helped end the political careers of two senators — John Cornyn of Texas and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana — and Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky.

But Trump was unable to lift Rep. Randy Feenstra to victory in Iowa's Republican primary for governor. Even though Trump jumped in with his backing last week, Feenstra narrowly lost to Zach Lahn.

The outcome was a rare setback for Trump, who basks in his ability to sway the vote among Republicans with his endorsement. It now sets up what Democrats see as one of their best opportunities to pick up a governorship this year.

Democrats nominated Rob Sand, who ran unopposed in the primary. He has the rural roots that have become rare among Democrats and is a proven winner in a Republican-leaning state, having been elected twice as auditor.

Lahn was not well known in Iowa politics when he launched his campaign in November, but he built support among conservatives. He championed policies including a total ban on abortion and keeping liberal ideology out of public school classrooms.

Lahn also developed a following with the "Make America Healthy Again" movement, which has clashed with the Trump administration over its embrace of pesticides.

The California drama drags on

The Los Angeles mayor's race was jolted by the candidacy of Spencer Pratt, who starred on the reality television show "The Hills." The Republican has been trying to capitalize on dissatisfaction with Democrat Karen Bass, who is seeking a second term.

Bass secured enough votes to make the November runoff, but it was unclear who her opponent will be. Also running is Nithya Raman, a progressive member of the City Council.

The race for California governor has been especially chaotic.

With Democrat Gavin Newsom barred from seeking a third term, about 60 names were on the ballot to succeed him. Some of the state's most prominent politicians, including former Vice President Kamala Harris and Sen. Alex Padilla, did not run. One who did, former Rep. Eric Swalwell, withdrew after being accused of sexual assault, which he denied.

Under the state's primary system, all candidates appear on a single ballot and the top two finishers advance to the November general election, regardless of party.

In the final days of the campaign, much of the attention focused on Democrats Xavier Becerra, a former congressman and state attorney general who was health secretary under Democratic President Joe Biden, and Tom Steyer, a billionaire known for his climate activism. Republican Steve Hilton campaigned with Trump's endorsement.

The three were leading in early returns after polls closed.

If Becerra were to advance to one of the two slots on the fall ballot, he presents a natural choice for voters more comfortable with a traditional candidate. Steyer and Hilton have both presented themselves as advocating significant changes.

California has been governed by establishment-oriented Democrats for two decades. The primary results will indicate the level of change being sought in a state confronting serious challenges ranging from affordability to crime and will signal whether the \$200 million Steyer put into the race from his own money turned out to be a good investment.

Independents emerge in Senate races in Republican strongholds

If Democrats hope to compete in Senate contests in Republican strongholds this fall, they may have to

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abandon their party's nominees and rally around independents.

That's one of the takeaways after voters on Tuesday finalized general election matchups in Montana and South Dakota, where little-known Democrats earned their party's nominations. In both states, however, higher-profile independent candidates also qualified for the general election ballot.

It's much the same in Idaho and Nebraska, which held Senate primaries last month. Democratic leaders in Nebraska are openly endorsing independent Dan Osborne over their party's nominee, who has promised to drop out to make it easier for Osborne to win.

In Montana, independent Seth Bodnar, a former University of Montana president, looks like the strongest opponent to Republican Kurt Alme — on paper, at least. Bodnar raised more money than all of the five Democratic primary candidates combined. He has even significantly outraised Trump-backed Alme.

In South Dakota, Sen. Mike Rounds cruised to the Republican nomination on Tuesday. He will face Democrat Julian Beaudion, a former highway patrol trooper and small business owner. But it's a former Democrat now running as an independent, military veteran Brian Bengs, who some Democrats believe may be the tougher challenger.

The Democrats shift toward independents reflects the party's toxic brand in Republican strongholds.

Absent congressman gets a Democratic challenger

Democrats nominated Rebecca Bennett to take on Republican Rep. Tom Kean Jr. in New Jersey's 7th Congressional District, which stretches from the New York City suburbs to the Pennsylvania border.

The seat is critical for Republicans as they defend a narrow majority in Congress. The race was always going to be one of the most competitive on a map that has been increasingly gerrymandered to protect both parties. But it's under particularly close scrutiny because of Kean's extended and unexplained medical absence.

He's missed more than 100 votes since casting his last one on March 5.

Bennett, a former Navy pilot, was among the Democrats in the primary who made the absence and the lack of clarity surrounding it an issue, arguing Kean wasn't around to protect money for a new rail tunnel connecting New Jersey and New York City. That line of criticism will likely only grow heading into the general election.

Trump reiterated his endorsement of Kean on Monday. The congressman released a statement Tuesday saying he is "focused on my recovery" and would return to "in person work within a matter of weeks."

New Mexico could make history in governor's race

The stage is set for Deb Haaland to make history this fall after Biden's interior secretary secured the Democratic nomination for governor in New Mexico.

Haaland was the first Native American to serve in the Cabinet. This fall, she could become the first Native American woman in U.S. history to be elected governor.

She defeated Albuquerque-based District Attorney Sam Bregman, the father of Chicago Cubs All-Star Alex Bregman, in a Democratic primary campaign that emphasized her ancestral roots in addition to lowering costs and her governing experience.

Haaland will face Republican Gregory Hull in the general election.

'We're still behind' in Congo's Ebola outbreak even as testing improves, WHO chief says

By OPE ADETAYO and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Congo's Ebola outbreak "had a big head start, and we're still behind," the head of the World Health Organization said Wednesday, adding that the medical community was "catching up" even as militant attacks plague the stricken region.

Congo's military said an attack late on Tuesday by an Islamic State affiliate — a group known as the Allied Democratic Forces — killed 16 people in the Beni territory in North Kivu province.

The militants struck in response for a joint operation of Congolese and Ugandan armies, which have been battling the group that operates in the border regions of the two countries. Last month, the group attacked

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Congolese villages near the Ugandan border, killing at least 40 people and burning and looting homes.

The violence has hampered efforts to combat the outbreak of the rare Bundibugyo type of Ebola, which was announced in mid-May in eastern Congo's provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu.

Since then, Congolese authorities have confirmed 60 deaths in the outbreak out of 344 cases. The number of suspected cases has gone down from 906 to 116. Neighboring Uganda has 15 confirmed cases, including one death, its health ministry said Tuesday.

WHO chief offers some hope for the outbreak

The agency's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Wednesday that testing is improving in the struggle against Ebola, with scaled-up laboratory and diagnostic capacity though contact tracing in Congo "is not yet where it needs to be."

"The outbreak had a big head start, and we're still behind," he said. But "we are catching up."

Tedros spoke a day after returning to Geneva from Congo, where he visited the epicenter of the outbreak. "What I saw gave me hope, although challenges remain."

He also said that blanket travel restrictions imposed by some countries "are disrupting supply chains and hindering the response," and asked for them to be lifted. He stressed that WHO recommends exit screening at airports, ports and border crossings.

He avoided a reporter's question about a U.S. quarantine center in Kenya where American Ebola patients would be quarantined, which has drawn protests.

"I think based on their risk assessment ... they (the United States) can do whatever they think is right for them," the WHO chief said.

The outbreak struck in an extremely vulnerable region

Experts have said the virus spread for weeks in one of the world's most vulnerable regions before lab testing confirmed it. Resources, including protective gear, have been rushed to the outbreak for a type of Ebola with no approved medicine or vaccine.

At least five people have recovered from the virus, rare signs of hope.

"The true extent of the outbreak remains difficult to assess. Extremely limited testing capacity and difficulties accessing certain areas necessitate interpreting these figures with caution," Doctors Without Borders, said Monday about the case numbers.

Getting a potential vaccine to the region could take months.

"It's difficult to have an effective vaccine that adheres to the scientific protocol available quickly," Dr. Aruna Abedi, a Congolese epidemiologist who has managed previous outbreaks in the country, told The Associated Press.

While laboratory and diagnostic resources improve for the outbreak, Tedros said the tracing of people who had contact with infected people in Congo is still behind.

"Only about 45% of contacts have been followed up, and to get ahead of the outbreak we need to get that number up to above 90%," he said. "Insecurity, displacement and mobile populations make contact tracing especially difficult."

Congo has long struggled with a multitude of security crises and insecurity has over the years created a huge and vulnerable displaced population. Eastern Congo, where the latest Ebola outbreak is taking place, has several active armed groups, including the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group that seized key cities Goma and Bukavu over a year ago, and the IS affiliate.

Wary residents have attacked health centers in the outbreak, at times demanding the bodies of loved ones. Health workers also have been battling mistaken beliefs among some residents that Ebola isn't real, which has kept some from seeking care.

Ukrainian drones hit St. Petersburg oil terminal before city hosts Russian economic forum

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukrainian long-range drones struck an oil terminal in St. Petersburg and set it ablaze, Ukrainian President

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Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday, sending smoke billowing over the city where Russian President Vladimir Putin was born as it hosts Russia's leading event for attracting foreign capital.

The drones flew more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) to hit the terminal in Russia's second-largest city, Zelenskyy said on social media, a day after Moscow launched a major drone and missile attack on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities.

Russian authorities said only that the Ukrainian drone strike targeted St. Petersburg's infrastructure, without providing details. The city's airport briefly suspended flights overnight because of the attack. Authorities cut off mobile internet services.

With the front line barely moving as swarms of drones hinder advances, both sides have sought an edge by launching long-range strikes. The war that followed Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor is more than four years old, with no end in sight.

Ukraine's drone successes embarrass Putin

The latest strikes are another embarrassment for Putin, weeks after he pruned back an annual Victory Day parade in Moscow because of fears of Ukrainian drone attacks.

Putin is set to speak on Friday at the economic forum in St. Petersburg that the Kremlin views as a prestige event. The gathering is sometimes called Russia's Davos, likening it to the World Economic Forum held in Switzerland.

Major Western investors and officials have stayed away since Russia launched its all-out war against Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Saudi Arabia is a special guest this year and is due to send a large business delegation.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine aimed only at "legitimate targets" related to Russia's war effort and indicated that Kyiv plans to escalate its long-range drone attacks. "It is only a matter of time when we will be able to increase the scale of our own mass strikes," he told reporters.

The strikes on St. Petersburg came a day after Russia's attack on Ukraine killed 23 civilians and wounded 151 other people, as Moscow followed through with its threat of escalating its barrages.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that Russia's deep strikes have already taken on a "systematic" character.

Ukraine needs more air defense help

Ukraine's own long-range attacks are aimed at diminishing Russia's oil production, which is a key source of funding for Moscow, and disrupting weapon production. Kyiv has repeatedly targeted oil facilities in St. Petersburg and nearby ports.

But Ukraine is short of American-made Patriot air defense missiles, in part because of U.S. stocks being depleted by the Iran war, leaving Ukrainian territory vulnerable to Russia's ballistic missiles.

Zelenskyy on Wednesday expressed frustration with his own government's officials, saying there's an agreement "at the highest political level" for the purchase of Patriot systems, but implementation is being held up by financial, legal and technical considerations.

"The wait has taken too long," he said on social media, demanding that officials unblock the purchase or there will be "serious personnel decisions."

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, visiting Kyiv on Wednesday for talks with Ukrainian officials, said the flow of interceptor missiles from the U.S. to Ukraine continues. The U.S. is "doing what it can" to keep supplying them although it is limited by the production rate, he told a news conference.

Rutte also said young Russians and their families "are being sold a raw deal" by Moscow, as incorporation in the Russian military dooms soldiers to poor training and equipment and low chances of surviving battlefield wounds.

Ukraine also strikes a Russian naval base

Other Ukrainian drone attacks overnight set fire to the Russian guided-missile corvette Boikiy, which was in dry dock at the Kronstadt naval base, according to Robert Brovdi, commander of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces. Kronstadt is an old base for Russia's Baltic Fleet located west of St. Petersburg. Satellite images showed fire crews working to control the fires onboard.

Drones also hit a Russian manufacturing plant involved in weapon production in the Tambov region, 600

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kilometers (370 miles) from Ukraine, Zelenskyy said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said air defenses downed 354 Ukrainian drones overnight.

In the Russia-controlled part of Ukraine's Donetsk region, a Ukrainian strike hit a bus that was traveling from Moscow to the Crimean Peninsula, killing seven people and wounding 11 others, according to the Kremlin-appointed head of Donetsk, Denis Pushilin.

In the Smolensk region, two firefighters were killed by a Ukrainian drone attack, according to the regional governor, Vasily Anokhin. He said that two other firefighters and a local resident were wounded.

Meanwhile, Russia fired 198 long-range drones at Ukraine last night, according to Ukraine's air force, with air defenses neutralizing 189.

Authorities in Ukraine's northern Sumy region said that over the previous 24 hours, one civilian was killed and 15 more were wounded, including three children, by Russian strikes.

In the southern Kherson, Russian overnight shelling and drone strikes killed an 86-year-old woman and wounded five other people, according to regional authorities.

Republicans won the redistricting battle. Now voters will decide whether they win Congress

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

A no-holds-barred bout of partisan redistricting has been won by Republicans. Now it's up to voters to decide whether it matters for control of Congress.

Republicans could net about 10 additional U.S. House seats in the November elections if redrawn voting districts perform as they were intended. The question is whether that's enough for the GOP to hold on to a majority in the chamber, where Democrats need to gain only a few seats to take control.

Political trends and historic patterns favor Democrats. President Donald Trump's approval ratings are negative. And the incumbent's party has lost House seats in every midterm election over the past two decades.

This election season already has been unusual. Voting districts typically are redrawn only after a census at the start of each decade. But Trump urged Republicans last summer to redraw congressional districts to their advantage to try to prevent losses in the 2026 midterms.

Since then, Republicans think they could win as many as 16 additional seats from new House maps enacted in eight states — Texas, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana and Alabama. Democrats, whose counterattack faced several setbacks, think they could win up to six additional seats from new districts in California and Utah.

Nearly 145 million people — about two of every five U.S. residents — live in states with new congressional districts for this election.

Yet the mid-decade redistricting battle didn't go as far as it could have.

Republicans in Kansas and Democrats in Illinois both rebuffed party pushes to take up redistricting. In Republican-led Indiana and South Carolina and Democratic-led Maryland, new congressional districts passed the state House but ultimately died in the state Senate. The Virginia Supreme Court invalidated new voter-approved districts that could have helped Democrats win up to four additional seats. And the U.S. Supreme Court set aside a lower court order that could have helped Democrats gain a congressional seat in New York.

Here's a look at the states with new U.S. House maps:

Texas

Current map: 13 Democrats, 25 Republicans

New map: Republican Gov. Greg Abbott signed a revised House map into law last August that could help Republicans win five additional seats. Democrats think they could still win some of those seats.

Missouri

Current map: two Democrats, six Republicans

New map: Republican Gov. Mike Kehoe signed a revised House map into law last September that could

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help Republicans win an additional seat by reshaping a Democratic-held district based in Kansas City. Republican Secretary of State Denny Hoskins has until Aug. 4 — the date of Missouri's primaries — to decide whether to reject an initiative petition seeking a statewide vote on the map.

North Carolina

Current map: four Democrats, 10 Republicans

New map: The Republican-led General Assembly gave final approval in October to revised districts that could help Republicans win an additional seat.

Ohio

Current map: five Democrats, 10 Republicans

New map: A bipartisan panel composed primarily of Republicans voted in October to approve revised House districts that improve Republicans' chances of winning two additional seats. Democrats think they could still win those seats.

California

Current map: 43 Democrats, nine Republicans

New map: Voters in November approved revised House districts drawn by the Democratic-led Legislature that could help Democrats win five additional seats.

Utah

Current map: no Democrats, four Republicans

New map: A judge in November imposed revised House districts that could help Democrats win a seat in the Salt Lake City area.

Florida

Current map: eight Democrats, 20 Republicans

New map: Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed revised House districts in May that improve the GOP's chances of winning four additional seats. Legal challenges are pending.

Tennessee

Current map: one Democrat, eight Republicans

New map: Republican Gov. Bill Lee signed new House districts in May that improve the GOP's chances of winning an additional seat by carving up the lone Democratic-held seat, a majority-Black district based in Memphis. Legal challenges are pending.

Louisiana

Current map: two Democrats, four Republicans

New map: Republican Gov. Jeff Landry signed off on new House districts in May that improve Republican chances of winning an additional seat by eliminating a majority-Black district held by a Democrat that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down as an illegal racial gerrymander.

Alabama

Current map: two Democrats, five Republicans

New map: The U.S. Supreme Court in June allowed the state to use a congressional map approved by Republican state lawmakers that improves the GOP's chances of winning an additional seat by reshaping a Democratic-held district that has a large number of Black voters.

Trump's Education Department is backing away from addressing civil rights for Black students

By ANNIE MA AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — For generations, the federal government enforced civil rights laws with an eye toward remedying historic, systemic discrimination against Black people and other people of color. The Department of Justice pressed schools to desegregate. The Department of Education worked to promote equal opportunity and held schools accountable for racial bias.

But under the Trump administration, efforts to address deep-rooted inequities for students of color are being cast as discriminatory against white students. Programs that have long withstood legal scrutiny are

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now quick to be deemed “illegal DEI” — diversity, equity and inclusion — by the White House. Schools that do not comply have faced threats to their funding, and in some cases, lost federal grants.

Civil rights lawyers describe the Republican administration’s actions as a complete inversion of legal history. “It’s literally flipping the purpose of civil rights law on its head, not just harming Black students and students of color, but entire school communities,” said Michael Pillera, director of the Educational Opportunities Project at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. “It’s unmoored from the actual history of our country and untethered to the reality of life in this country.”

The administration has opened investigations or joined litigation over a wide range of efforts to address racial inequality. President Donald Trump’s Justice Department is investigating programs to increase the number of teachers of color in Rhode Island and Iowa. Grants to districts to train teachers or recruit school mental health workers have been discontinued for mentions of diversity in recruitment.

In a statement, the Education Department said programs receiving federal money must follow the law, which prohibits discrimination based on race.

“Serving student needs and following the law are not irreconcilable mandates. Advocates and educators have no reason to stress if they abide by the law,” said Amelia Joy, a department spokesperson.

The administration investigated Chicago Public Schools and withheld more than \$20 million when the district refused to end its Black Student Success Program, which aims to increase access to advanced coursework for Black students and reduce overly harsh discipline.

Complaints against programs to address inequities find new traction

A similar effort to close racial achievement gaps in Los Angeles is under the same pressure.

The Los Angeles Unified School District created the Black Student Achievement Plan after an outpouring of student activism following the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It supports schools with extra teachers, counselors and curriculum in Black history.

Initially, the district chose schools partially based on the number of Black students enrolled. In 2023, Defending Education, a Virginia-based conservative group, filed a complaint to the Education Department, alleging discrimination against non-Black students. The district said it would no longer consider Black enrollment and instead focus solely on metrics such as high absenteeism and low test scores, emphasizing that all students could take part.

After the changes, the Education Department in 2024 said it saw no evidence of a violation. But when Defending Education filed its complaint again this year, the department’s Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation.

Sarah Parshall Perry, senior legal fellow at Defending Education, said it refiled the complaint after district leaders were recorded saying the program had not materially changed, despite the new criteria.

“Our goal is not to make LA Unified a target, but rather to make sure that when people say that they are eliminating racially discriminatory aspects of programs, that they’re actually making good on their word,” Perry said.

In a written statement, the school district said its programs are aligned with state and federal laws and are open to all students.

Makeda Walker-Deen, a junior at Dorsey High School in Los Angeles, said the program has supported her in several ways through high school.

A program counselor directed her toward college preparation programs, which made it possible for her to visit the University of California, Berkeley, and Stanford, colleges where she is thinking of applying. Psychologists and social workers she connected with have helped her navigate pressure and anxiety.

“I think that the things a lot of critics are saying are so unreasonable,” she said. “They’re saying that a program that’s meant to help Black students, other students of color, is discriminatory. We’ve been discriminated against in school systems basically our entire lives.”

The district has seen signs of impact. In recent state testing, Black students in the district outperformed the average Black student in California.

“When you provide teachers and school personnel with knowledge and skills to help your lowest performing students, everyone wins,” said Tyrone Howard, an education professor at UCLA who consulted

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on the initiative.

Organizers worry pressures on the program will slow efforts to address inequities for Black students.

"Where is the uproar about the failings of the public education system for Black children?" said Christian Flagg, director of youth organizing at Community Coalition, which lobbied for the creation of the achievement plan. "We have had this student group at the bottom for so long, these massive gaps for so long. But when we do something to try to address it, there's a problem."

The Justice Department targets a separate LA program

The pivot in the federal government's approach to civil rights in schools has taken several forms under Trump.

The Justice Department has released school districts from court-ordered desegregation plans dating to the Civil Rights Movement, describing them as outdated and burdensome. The Education Department has stripped funding from some districts that used it to create magnet schools intended to be more diverse.

In correspondence discouraging districts' diversity programs, the administration has repeatedly cited a broad interpretation of the Supreme Court's ruling on affirmative action, which prevented colleges and universities from directly considering race in admissions.

While that ruling pertained only to admissions, the administration last winter notified schools that any differential treatment based on race was unconstitutional. A federal court struck down that guidance last year, but advocates say schools may still preemptively end equity programs to avoid drawing federal scrutiny.

In Los Angeles, the Justice Department has tried to end another racial equity effort.

In the 1970s, courts ordered the district to address the harms of its segregated schools. The case led to a short-lived period where Black students and white students were bused to different schools. The more lasting programs included the district's magnet schools, and a special designation for "Predominantly Hispanic, Black, Asian or Other Non-Anglo" schools.

That program offers smaller class sizes and additional parent-teacher conferences when 70% of the students zoned for that school are students of color. The vast majority of district schools qualify.

In January, the conservative 1776 Project Foundation filed a lawsuit challenging the designation, describing it as "a program of overt discrimination against a new minority: White students." The next month, the Justice Department filed its own complaint and asked to join the lawsuit.

The district's "desegregation program has outlived its usefulness to the point of being unconstitutional," a federal prosecutor said in a news release.

Decades of inequity show that is not true, said lawyer Mark Rosenbaum, who years ago represented students of color in L.A.'s desegregation case.

"The opponents of desegregation always said, 'Drop desegregation, and we will put resources into these schools,'" Rosenbaum said. "You know, we are still waiting for that to happen."

Trump takes the lead for America's 250th birthday and World Cup celebrations

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When nearly all the scheduled musical performers pulled out of a concert series marking America's 250th anniversary — fearing the event had become too closely tied to President Donald Trump — he responded by making it official.

Trump announced he'd now be the headlining act of the Great American State Fair.

That put to rest any possible scenario where a president who has built his personal and political persona on seizing the spotlight might cede the stage to avoid overshadowing a national celebration bigger than himself. It also offered a peek into how the president is likely to approach hosting the upcoming World Cup.

From his reality shows before becoming a politician, to hours spent entertaining at events in ways planned and impromptu, to proudly showing off his various properties and efforts to overhaul the White House, the president relishes hosting. Last year he even jokingly mused about leaving the presidency to do it again full time on TV.

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Trump can be a gracious, personable and highly watchable master of ceremonies — but he's also one who tends to make every event about himself.

"The president has an outsized personality," said Timothy Naftali, former director of Richard Nixon's presidential library and professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. "There's a predictability to the way in which the president frames his actions — or any actions around any event associated with him — and that's just part of who he is, and his makeup and his professional background."

Exhibit A is the fair, which begins June 25 and was supposed to feature concerts but now will be kicked off by a Trump rally. That will follow a UFC bout at the White House on June 14. Trump is a longtime cage match fan and the event marks his 80th birthday, but the president has sought to bill it as part of the anniversary festivities.

Many presidents relished hosting — but not like this

Andrew Jackson threw open the White House for an 1829 Inauguration Day bash so unruly that staff eventually dispersed the crowd by moving tubs of whiskey and ice cream to the lawn. Franklin D. Roosevelt mixed pre-dinner cocktails for friends and aides at White House gatherings he playfully dubbed "The Children's Hour." Audrey Hepburn was among the luminaries Ronald Reagan hosted at the White House.

Trump frequently had first-term dinners with business leaders but has more fully embraced the role since returning to the White House. He built a patio area similar to one at his Mar-a-Lago estate and frequently travels to Florida and his properties in Bedminster, New Jersey, and Sterling, Virginia, to headline fundraisers and other swanky gatherings.

Asked if Trump might overshadow events meant to bring the country and the world together, White House spokesman Davis Ingle pointed to the president's efforts to lead extensive renovations at the White House and around Washington. He said in a statement that the "historic beautification" gives the city "the glory it deserves during our nation's historic semiquincentennial celebration — something everyone should celebrate."

Still, Trump has found unprecedented ways to inject himself into the anniversary.

The State Department is issuing passports with the president's picture and officials have designed a new \$250 bill with his likeness. The Trump Organization, being run by Trump's children while he's president, applied to trademark "Trump 250" logos and other merchandise.

The U.S. Mint is also producing a 24-karat gold commemorative coin with Trump's face, though that recalls a half-dollar silver coin bearing the likeness of President Calvin Coolidge to help mark America's 150th anniversary in 1926.

Past presidents had starring anniversary roles

Ulysses S. Grant opened a Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia to mark the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1876. Richard Nixon, in 1971, inaugurated a five-year "Bicentennial Era" ahead of the 200-year mark, though he resigned before the big day arrived.

Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, then in the midst of an ultimately unsuccessful reelection campaign, began the week of July 4, 1976, by inaugurating the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum and attending a Kennedy Center event featuring Bob Hope, O.J. Simpson and others reading patriotic texts.

On Independence Day, Ford spoke at historic Valley Forge, then traveled to Philadelphia's Independence Hall, declaring, "Liberty is a living flame to be fed, not dead ashes to be revered." He also went to New York Harbor for a tall ship parade, presided over naturalization ceremonies at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate and hosted a state dinner for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.

Still, "while Ford certainly hoped to use the bicentennial to promote his reelection campaign, he didn't do it in such a self-aggrandizing, self-centered, narcissistic way," said Marc Stein, a history professor at San Francisco State University and author of "Bicentennial: A Revolutionary History of the 1970s."

Ford, added Naftali, "knew when to step out of the limelight and make sure the focus was on what mattered, which was the United States of America and the Declaration of Independence."

Trump, by contrast, "generally has contempt for norms" and rarely mentions "the great sweep of history," Naftali said.

Dueling anniversary planners as Trump pushes to revise history

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Congress charged a national organization, America250, with planning commemorative events. Ahead of the 2024 election, the group drafted a memo asking whomever the incoming president was to mobilize federal agencies and welcoming presidential involvement in events and initiatives.

Asked about Trump, America250 Chair Rosie Rios said the group "has had a very supportive and collaborative relationship with the organizations planning initiatives on behalf of the president."

But Rios' organization is separate from Freedom 250, a mix of public and private partnerships which the Trump administration established to fund and prepare anniversary events — which has caused confusion.

America250 aims to "inspire our fellow Americans to reflect on our past, strengthen our love of country, and renew our commitment to the ideals of democracy through programs that educate, engage, and unite us as a nation."

That might seem a departure from the "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History" executive order Trump signed last year. It sought to beat back a "revisionist movement" responsible for "replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth."

Stein, now serving a one-year term as president of the Organization of American Historians, is helping organize "We Want More History," a push to coordinate local events celebrating the public's love for the subject in fact-based ways.

He said Trump's version of history is "closer to propaganda, and it's closer to cheerleading."

World Cup gives Trump another platform to play host

The president has similarly taken his exceeding-normal-limits approach to the soccer tournament the U.S. is co-hosting with Mexico and Canada.

He created a federal World Cup task force, and leads it. He collected a peace prize from soccer's governing body, FIFA, and said he'd be on stage to present the tournament's golden trophy to the winning team.

Trump even oversaw the tournament's draw at the Kennedy Center, which he's sought to rename for himself, sparking legal challenges.

He returned to the same building to headline December's Kennedy Center Honors, noting, "We never had a president hosting the awards before." He later posted on social media, "Would you like me to leave the Presidency in order to make 'hosting' a full time job?"

Naftali noted, "Whatever filters there were in the first term — and there weren't many — are gone."

"It's undiluted Donald Trump."

A diet of royal jelly isn't the only thing that makes a queen bee

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have identified a group of worker honeybees that are specially adapted to build their queen's waxy abode within the hive.

Worker bees perform a myriad of jobs to keep up the hive, including collecting food, nurturing young bees and caring for the queen, who lays all the eggs. New research reveals that the honeybees responsible for crafting the queen's home effectively run a fever to help melt and blend special chemicals into the wax.

"No one had ever thought that there might be a specialized group of workers that were building these queen cells," said bee researcher Julia Bowsher with North Dakota State University, who had no role in the study.

These newly identified bees were younger and also had patterns of expression in their genes that made them uniquely suited to the task. The resulting peanut-shaped home was also distinct in its makeup, as it was made of softer wax with a higher melting point than the kind used to build worker bees' homes.

Queens are raised eating royal jelly secreted from the glands of worker bees and scientists have long believed diet was the main key to making a monarch. The new findings, published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*, suggest that the queen's environment might also play a role.

To test that theory, researchers raised baby queens in cups capped with either queen or worker wax. Despite eating royal jelly, the queens raised in worker wax were smaller and didn't survive as well.

"For centuries, we believed 'you are what you eat' was the only rule for making a queen bee. Our study

rewrites that rule to say 'you are where you live, too,'" Kai Wang, a study co-author with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said in an email.

The findings offer a rare look inside the hive, but questions remain.

Honeybees pollinate and ensure the survival of crops such as blueberries, squash, watermelon and almonds. Further research is needed to learn more about the secret lives of queen cell-building bees and the exact combination of factors that produce the hive's head honcho.

"I would really like to know more about the specific chemical composition of this wax and which active ingredients are directly affecting the growth of the queens," Bowsheer said.

George Santos reported to prosecutors over suspicious Kalshi trades, AP source says

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A prediction market reported former U.S. Rep. George Santos to federal prosecutors after he boasted he'd be going to President Donald Trump's State of the Union address, then bet against his own attendance, according to a person familiar with the investigation.

Kalshi, the online prediction marketplace, referred Santos to the Department of Justice after detecting suspicious trades made by him ahead of Trump's Feb. 24 speech, the person said. The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Kalshi also reported the trades to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, a federal regulatory body that has vowed to crack down on insider trading in prediction marketplaces.

The Justice Department and the CFTC didn't immediately respond Tuesday to inquiries from the AP.

Santos also did not respond to text messages or phone calls.

The referral was first reported by NPR. Santos told NPR that he wasn't aware of the investigation. He declined to say whether he had a Kalshi account.

"I'm not saying yes, I'm not saying no," Santos told NPR.

The convicted ex-congressman had repeatedly discussed his intention to attend the State of the Union, which came just four months after he was granted clemency by Trump in a fraud case that led to his expulsion from the U.S. House.

On the eve of Trump's speech, Kalshi put the odds of Santos attending at close to 75%.

Then, minutes into the speech, Santos posted on X that he had been waylaid at the airport. Immediately, several social media users accused him of running another scheme.

"Santos talking to his accountant and telling him to open his Kalshi account and bet all his money on No," one user wrote, alongside a meme of Al Pacino counting money in the movie Scarface.

In March, Santos addressed the complaints on his podcast.

"I guess people lost money," he said. "Some people made unexpected money. That's to show you how fragile these markets are."

Santos, who won office as a Republican after inventing a bogus persona as a Wall Street dealmaker, was sentenced to seven years in prison after pleading guilty to fraud and identity theft in 2024.

After serving just 84 days, he was ordered released by Trump, who called Santos a "rogue" but said he didn't deserve a harsh sentence and should get credit for voting Republican.

Prediction markets, including Kalshi and its chief rival Polymarket, have drawn scrutiny as their businesses have expanded — with some lawmakers urging the platforms to do more to guard against insider trading.

Both companies have said they are reporting suspicious trades to federal regulators. Some investigations have led to criminal charges. In April a soldier involved in the military operation to capture Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was charged with using classified information to win more than \$400,000 predicting the date of his capture on Polymarket.

In April, the Senate approved a bipartisan resolution to prevent its own members from using prediction

markets.

Raúl Castro turns 95 as Cuba celebrates enigmatic figure

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

Raúl Castro turned 95 on Wednesday, a landmark birthday for a man still helping lead one of the last communist countries in the world.

His name and face became synonymous with the 1959 revolution led by his brother, Fidel Castro. Decades after the triumphant revolution, Fidel Castro stepped down, and Raúl Castro served as Cuba's president for 12 years.

He formally retired from politics in April 2021 but still serves as general of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, has a seat in the National Assembly and is considered to play a central role in rising tensions with the U.S., which recently indicted him.

Here's a look at the life of a man known as the "hero of the Republic of Cuba."

Raúl Castro became involved in politics early

Castro was born on June 3, 1931, in the village of Birán in eastern Cuba. He was the fourth of seven children; his mother was Cuban and his father Spanish.

As a child, he attended school in Santiago de Cuba but later moved to Havana, where he began studying law at the university and became deeply involved in student politics, opposing the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

By 1953, he was part of a group that attacked military barracks in Santiago de Cuba as part of a failed effort to overthrow Batista. He was charged, jailed and later released, fleeing to Mexico, where he joined the guerrilla group that would soon unseat Batista.

After a victorious revolution in 1959, Castro was appointed minister of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces and oversaw battles in Africa and Latin America that rankled some U.S. Republicans.

Many Cubans, including María Cristina Barrio Ramos, a 62-year-old teacher who lives in Havana, praised him for his actions.

"He gave us everything so that we could be free," she said. "We owe our freedom and dignity to him."

In October 1965, Raúl Castro became the second secretary of the Central Committee of Cuba's Communist Party. At the time, Fidel Castro lauded him in a speech.

"It is a privilege for me that, in addition to being an extraordinary revolutionary figure, he is a brother," Castro said as his sibling stood up and smiled as the crowd around him applauded.

Fidel Castro was known for praising his brother: "Everyone who gets to know him and become close to him realizes his humanism, his great character, and his feelings; they are surprised by the image of Raúl as belligerent, aggressive and harsh, when they see the feelings of friendship, affection, and love he is capable of having for people. And he has been a great mentor and a great educator."

Castro rises to power after brother's health worsens

In 2006, Fidel Castro's health began to decline, and Raúl Castro was temporarily handed power in late July of that year until Cuba's National Assembly elected him as president in February 2008.

In the years that followed, Castro proved himself to be more liberal than his brother, allowing private enterprises to operate in Cuba while former U.S. President Barack Obama lifted restrictions on remittances and family travel, and allowed U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba under certain conditions.

By 2015, the U.S. and Cuba restored diplomatic relations and reopened embassies. A year later, Obama traveled to Cuba to meet with Castro. That same year, commercial flights between the two countries restarted.

During a historic 2016 press conference in Havana, Castro famously tried to raise Obama's left arm, whose hand went limp in an image that went viral.

Under Castro, Cuba also entered negotiations with Russia's government in June 2014 that led to the cancellation of 90% of a multibillion-dollar debt dating from the time of the Soviet Union.

In 2018, Raúl Castro left the presidency in the hands of Miguel Díaz-Canel, marking the first time in

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decades that a person without "Castro" as their last name took control of the government.

In April 2021, Castro announced he would not seek another political position. Since then, he has made only sporadic public appearances.

Castro retires but remains a high-profile figure

Ever since officially retiring from politics, Raúl Castro has appeared in public only sporadically, but he is believed to still wield power behind the scenes even as he leads a discreet life.

His grandson and bodyguard, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, met with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of a Caribbean summit earlier this year. Since then, Cuban and U.S. officials have confirmed talks, but tensions between the two countries remain high.

Raúl Castro was last seen at a May 1 rally that drew tens of thousands of Cubans. He was dressed, as usual, in olive green military garb and stood at the side of Díaz-Canel. Behind him was Castro's grandson.

Almost three weeks later, the U.S. government indicted Raúl Castro in the 1996 downing of civilian planes flown by Miami-based exiles over Cuban waters. He faces charges including murder and destruction of an airplane.

While the government and its supporters have condemned the indictment, Raúl Castro has remained mum.

As his birthday approached, social media was flooded with the hashtag #RaúlesRaúl, a political figure who has long been adverse to birthdays, monuments and statues, just like his brother.

The Cuban Embassy in the U.S. noted on X: "Not many people have the privilege, the health, the stoicism — and if you like, you can also add: that quintessentially Cuban stubbornness — to reach the age of 95."

Meanwhile, Cuba's Communist Party posted several videos Tuesday on X of Cubans praising Castro.

"To talk about Cuba, you have to talk about Raúl," said Digna Guerra, director of the island's national choir. "He represents Cuban identity, he represents the Cuban people, he represents the revolution, which for us has immense significance. ... Thank you for existing."

Today in History: June 4, the Tiananmen Square Massacre

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, June 4, the 155th day of 2026. There are 210 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 4, 1989, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pro-democracy demonstrators and dozens of soldiers are estimated to have been killed when Chinese troops crushed a seven-week-long protest by demonstrators occupying Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Also on this date:

In 1812, the U.S. House of Representatives passed its first declaration of war against Britain, approving the measure by a vote of 79-49.

In 1919, Congress approved the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which said that the right of Americans to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." (The amendment was then sent to the states for ratification.)

In 1940, during World War II, the Allied military completed the evacuation of more than 338,000 troops from Dunkirk, France.

Also in 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared in a speech to the House of Commons: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

In 1942, the World War II naval Battle of Midway began, which resulted in a decisive American victory against Japan and marked a turning point in the war in the Pacific.

In 1986, Jonathan Jay Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, pleaded guilty in Washington to conspiring to deliver national defense information to Israel. (Sentenced to life in prison, Pollard would be released on parole in November 2015.)

In 1990, Dr. Jack Kevorkian carried out his first publicly assisted suicide, helping Janet Adkins, a 54-year-old Alzheimer's patient from Portland, Oregon, end her life in Oakland County, Michigan. (Kevorkian died

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in 2011.)

In 1998, a federal judge sentenced Terry Nichols to life in prison without parole for his role in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia issues its first drivers licenses to 10 women as the first step that month by the ultraconservative kingdom in lifting the world's only ban on women driving.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Bruce Dern is 90. Golf Hall of Famer Sandra Haynie is 83. Singer-actor Michelle Phillips is 82. Jazz musician Paquito D'Rivera is 78. Actor Parker Stevenson is 74. Actor Keith David is 70. Singer El DeBarge is 65. Opera singer Cecilia Bartoli is 60. R&B singer Al B. Sure! is 58. Actor Scott Wolf is 58. Comedian Horatio Sanz is 57. Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah is 55. Actor Noah Wyle is 55. Actor Angelina Jolie is 51. Actor-comedian T.J. Miller is 45. Olympic figure skating gold medalist Evan Lysacek is 41. Rapper Central Cee is 28. Singer Mackenzie Ziegler is 22