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Saturday, June 13

Olive Grove Golf Course will be hosting the Moose Lodge Scramble 18-hole tournament on Saturday, June 13th. Golf course access will be restricted until approximately 3:30 PM. However, the driving range will remain open throughout the day.

U14 Legion at Platte Tournament

Jr. Legion at Clark Tournament

U12 Baseball at Milbank Tournament

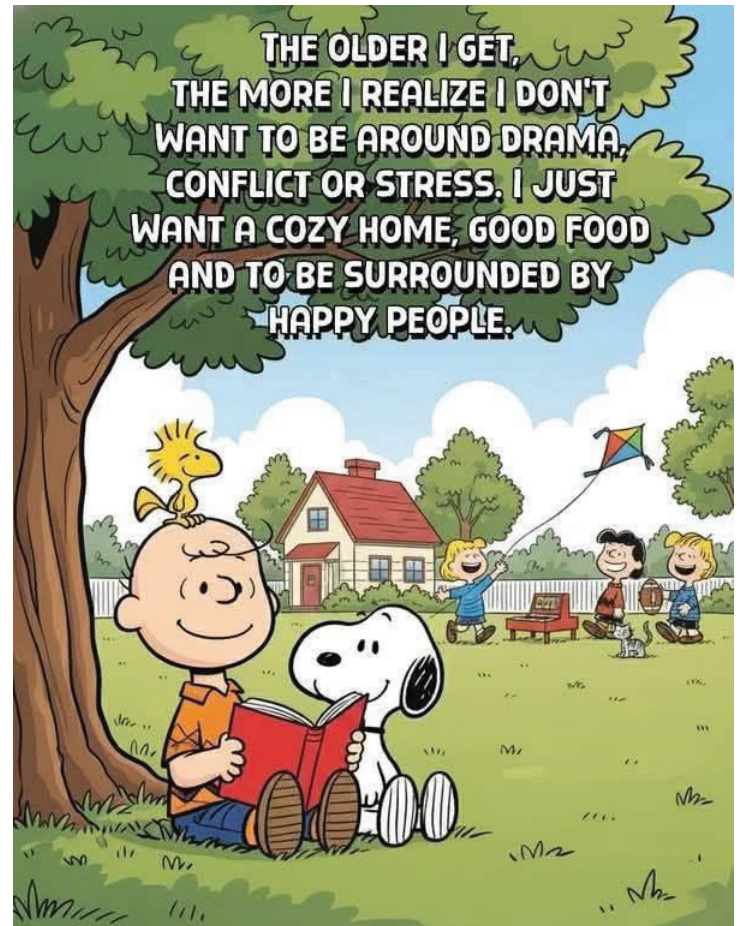
U8 Baseball at Milbank Tournament

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

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Sunday, June 14

FLAG DAY

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

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

U14 Legion at Platte Tournament

Jr. Legion at Clark Tournament

U10 Baseball at Milbank Tournament (ALL)

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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.

Spying Sea Creatures

China's Ministry of State Security claimed yesterday that foreign intelligence agencies are using fish, turtles, and other large sea creatures to conduct surveillance operations against the country.

The ministry said unspecified nations have been outfitting living marine animals with sensors and training them to swim to specific areas, where they collect data on water temperature, salinity, and ocean currents. Officials say they've also found buoys and a wave glider used to track maritime vessel activity. China alleges that much of the collected data is transmitted overseas via satellite, threatening China's national security. The government warned fishermen to stay vigilant and has previously awarded them up to \$73K for turning in alleged maritime spy devices.

In 2023, the British military claimed Russia was training dolphins to counter enemy divers in its war with Ukraine. The US and Russia deployed dolphins, sea lions, and killer whales during the Cold War.

US beats Paraguay 4-1 in 2026 World Cup debut.

The win moves the US Men's National Team one step closer to advancing to the Round of 32. To secure automatic qualification, the US must finish first or second in its group after playing the other three teams. The team's next match is against Australia on Friday, June 19, in Seattle, at 3 pm ET.

1440 is partnering with Men in Blazers to bring you the most detailed coverage of the world's biggest tournament this summer. Sign up here to get daily, in-depth updates.

US Park Police investigate giant "86 47" on the National Mall ahead of UFC fight.

The four-number sequence was found near the location of President Donald Trump's UFC Freedom 250 event tomorrow. "Eighty-six" is commonly used as slang for "get rid of," and Trump is the nation's 47th president. The Trump administration indicted former FBI Director James Comey in April over a social media post featuring seashells arranged to form the same numbers.

Separately, crews began the process of stripping Trump's name from the exterior of the Kennedy Center after a judge denied a last-minute effort to delay the removal.

Contemporary artist David Hockney dies at age 88.

Over his seven-decade career, Hockney used sun-soaked Southern California as his muse to explore everyday life in vibrant colors. He became a prominent figure in the 1960s Pop Art movement, began playing with computer graphics as early as 1985, and later experimented with the iPad. Openly gay at a time when few public figures were, Hockney often explored the male body and homosexuality in his work.

Pentagon releases third batch of declassified UFO files.

More than 70 newly released files, spanning the 1940s through this year, contain reports from the public, Defense Department, CIA, and other agencies. Among the more recent files is a rendering depicting an alleged 2022 sighting of an object some have compared to a pale, scaly potato. The Pentagon says it is preparing to release another batch soon.

Jeff Bezos' physical AI startup raises \$12B at \$41B valuation.

Prometheus, founded by Bezos and an ex-Google scientist, is building software to automate the engineering of complex physical systems, from jet engines to drug compounds. The startup launched in November with \$6.2B in funding, and its latest funding round—backed by JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, and BlackRock—will help expand its computing capacity.

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Hidden fungal network beneath Earth would stretch across the cosmos.

The first-ever global map of underground fungal networks—which nourish plants and absorb carbon—suggests that, if laid out in a straight line, these networks would span about 68 quadrillion miles. That’s nearly a billion times the distance from Earth to the sun, or roughly 10% of the width of the Milky Way. The milestone map brings visibility to an overlooked ecosystem and could guide conservation efforts.

Judge weighs alleged gag-order violation in Charlie Kirk murder case.

Lawyers for Tyler Robinson, the Utah man accused of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk, yesterday asked a judge to hold prosecutors in contempt for publicly commenting on recovered bullet fragments. The judge said he would issue a ruling at a later date, and any potential penalty remains unclear. Another hearing is set for July 6, when prosecutors must show they have enough evidence to proceed to trial.

Humankind(ness)

Dear readers— In honor of Father’s Day this month, we’re pausing our usual act of kindness stories to share reader submissions about dads. Enjoy!

“When my elementary teachers needed a bus driver for field trips, my dad volunteered. He’d worked as a bus driver in high school, but that was before a Commercial Driver’s License was required in our state. When I was 8 years old, my dad, then 38, studied road manuals for weeks in preparation for his CDL test. He passed it and spent the next three years driving my classmates and me all over South Carolina anytime we had a field trip, including some overnights. I loved going with him to pick up the buses in the morning, and I always felt so cool being the driver’s kid.”

— Joey H. in Durham, North Carolina

“I grew up in the 1960s on a small island in north Florida. My dad was the editor, publisher, photographer, and reporter for the weekly newspaper. He was widely admired for his dedication to the community and for his integrity. I was a teenage daughter, and he raised me alone. I’m sure that was quite the challenge. There is one memory I have thought about a lot. In gym class, we were told to ask our mothers to embroider our names on the pocket of the white shirt given to us along with the regulation blue shorts. All the other girls’ names were beautifully embroidered, but mine was special. Daddy had carefully stitched my name with blue thread in a staccato connection of short in-and-out stitches—each done with love and perseverance.”

— Candy D. in Maitland, Florida

“When I was about 4 years old, we went to the airport to see my uncle, who had been visiting, leave by airplane. We walked around watching planes flying and landing. After my uncle’s plane departed, we walked back to the car. My dad laughed when he let go of my hand. There was a puddle of sweat in his hand. That was because he’d never let go of my hand the whole time.”

— Peg L. in Wells, Maine

Humankind(ness) is a reader-built corner of joy. So, what act(s) of kindness did you experience this week? [Tell us here.](#)

Groton Football Team attends Valley City Team Camp



Groton Area Tigers varsity football returned this past week to the Valley City State University for 11 man team camp. Teams from South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Alaska participated in the VCSU 3 day team camp. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



The second team camp day ended with 11 teams competing in the "Overtime Challenge!" The Groton Tigers had a strong showing in the closing competition and they made the finals. They ended up runner up in the final team camp championship of the day. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Groton Tiger defensive coordinator, Travis Kurth, over looks the Tiger defense in one of many team camp scrimmages. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Bottom Photo: VCSU Team Camp director and VCSU head football coach, Dennis McCulloch, gives the closing remarks on the 3rd and final day. In the back ground under construction is the future VCSU Indoor Practice Facility and extension of the existing athletic complex. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

Groton Tigers new varsity head coach Jordan Carson calls the offense while assistant coaches Quinton Bearman and Seth Erickson look on. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Summer Brings Reminder to Clean, Drain, Dry

Summer is here, and as more boaters take to the water to fish or simply cool off South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) staff are reminding to practice Clean, Drain, Dry every time enjoying the water.

"This is the time of year that zebra mussels can be microscopic and most easily transported from waterbody to waterbody," said Tanner Davis, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator. "It is important for all boaters and water users to remember to Clean, Drain, Dry every time they leave the water."

GFP fisheries staff recently confirmed the presence of zebra mussels in Bitter Lake, which is located in Day County in northeast South Dakota.

"After a suspect report came in from a fishing guide on Bitter Lake, fisheries staff from Webster followed up and were able to find zebra mussels on the flooded trees south of the inlet on the northwest side of Bitter Lake," continued Davis. "With South Rush being positive for several years and due to direct water connectivity, additional detections were anticipated over time."

Bitter Lake, along with other connected waters such as Goose Lake and Solomon Slough, are now considered positive for zebra mussels.

"This was a great example of a boater reporting a suspect mussel and staff confirming presence," concluded Davis. "If you find something you suspect is a zebra mussel or other AIS species, please submit a suspect report on the [Citizen Monitoring page](#), contact your local or regional GFP office, or contact me directly at Tanner.Davis@state.sd.us."

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GFP Commission Holds June Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their June meeting at Heartland Energy in Madison June 11-12.

FINALIZATIONS

Mentored, Youth Deer, and Apprentice Hunting Seasons

The Commission closed nine counties in southeast South Dakota for mentored, youth, and apprentice deer hunting. The goal of this closure is to reduce antlerless deer harvest, and to enhance deer herd population growth. Among these nine units, the female deer harvest from these seasons was 255 in 2025 and accounted for most of the total female deer harvest.

This change, in conjunction with firearm license reductions in 12 units, is aimed to further increase population growth rates and limit overall harvest. Mentored, youth, and apprentice hunters will still be able to hunt other units open across the state.

Antelope Hunting Season Licenses

The Commission approved final antelope hunting season license allocations, including a 1% increase in buck-only firearm licenses. While recent population surveys indicate a 12% rise in antelope numbers, overall populations remain below established management objectives.

To support continued herd recovery, no changes were made to the archery or landowner-own-land seasons, and doe antelope licenses will remain unavailable. This management approach is designed to promote population growth, with no doe harvest permitted for at least the next two hunting seasons.

PROPOSALS

Definition of a Buck Deer and Bull Elk Antler

The Commission proposed a clean-up to remove “polished antler” and replace with “antler” from the definition of a buck and bull to allow an individual to harvest a velvet antlered deer or elk.

Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons

The Commission proposed several changes to the spring and fall turkey seasons.

For the Spring Turkey Season, the Commission proposed to remove references to federal property closures and to separate the Day and Codington County combined unit into county specific units for Day (PST-22A) and Codington (PST-05A) counties.

Proposed changes to the Fall Turkey Season include a weapons restriction change allowing for the use of rifles or shotguns for hunting turkeys in the fall for all units, except for Minnehaha County. In addition, the changes to fall turkey unit boundaries will result in the same Spring and Fall turkey unit boundaries for all units, except for the Black Hills.

The Commission also proposed to close Bennett and Sanborn counties to spring firearm turkey hunting and open Hughes County and close Gregory and Mellette counties to fall turkey hunting. All spring and fall turkey hunting season unit license numbers were shared and will be considered for adoption at the July Commission meeting.

Tagging and Transportation of Shooting Preserve Harvested Pheasants

The Commission accepted a petition to allow the transportation of harvested birds from a private shooting preserve directly to a lodge or cleaning facility not located on permitted acres prior to tagging.

Public Comments Being Accepted

To hear the discussion on these topics, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these topics in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CDT on July 5.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Webster July 9-10.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Podcast: The 'fatal error' in the Republican governor primary, and a look ahead to the runoff

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

O'BRIEN: Welcome back to Searchlight Report, a podcast from South Dakota Searchlight that brings you up to date on policy and politics in the Mount Rushmore State. I'm your host Meghan O'Brien. Last week's primary election included four candidates for the Republican nomination for governor. The winner in that race needed 35% of the vote, which none reached on Tuesday night. That means the top two candidates — current Governor Larry Rhoden and businessman Toby Doeden — will campaign for eight more weeks until a special election on July 28th. The winner will face Democrat Dan Ahlers in the November general election. Though Doeden didn't get enough support to win outright, he ended the night in first place at 31%. Rhoden finished second with 25%. The other two candidates were U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson, who was third with 23%, and state Speaker of the House Jon Hansen with 21%. Republican political commentator Pat Powers, who has written the South Dakota War College blog for more than 20 years, joined me for an interview about the primary and the runoff. The narrow margins stood out to him, especially compared to races for nominations to run for U.S. Senate and House.



Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden, left, and South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden are candidates in a July 28 runoff for the Republican nomination for governor. (Photos by South Dakota Searchlight)

POWERS: The thing that strikes me is that if you look at the numbers, it was really a narrow band. The low vote was Hansen at 21%, and the high vote was Doeden at 31%. I mean, that's, between the two, that's only represented a difference of 13,000 votes, where the other two fell in there. You know, you compare that to the one-on-one races of Marty Jackley and Mike Rounds, where, you know, the difference between them and their opponents are 70,000 votes. You know, they won with 79 and 76% of the votes. So, no one really broke from the pack, so to speak, in the governor's race. It was kind of a mad scramble to see who could put the most votes together. And, you know, it just, it ended up as it did. You know, you can't really say that anybody lost badly, because there's not that much difference between Larry Rhoden, Dusty Johnson or Jon Hansen. They, you know, they're all in that 20% range.

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O'BRIEN: Yeah, were you expecting to see Doden's numbers get that high?

POWERS: Well, I don't know that anybody did, because, you know, he's a new quantity in the, you know, he's new, and, really has no experience running before, but I — and I think the fatal error in the race was that everybody underestimated his performance and they never really went after him with any criticism. And if you think about it in that way, it's a lot like the, what people talk about in comparison, the Rounds-Kirby-Barnett race for governor, where Kirby and Barnett went after each other, but they left Mike alone. And then on election day, Mike took the win, you know. And so, with Toby Doeden, just like Mike Rounds, the attacks didn't happen to Toby. So, he kind of benefited from the hall pass. And, and I know some of the strategy out there for some of the candidates is they, they kind of thought Toby was the person they wanted to be in the runoff against. So, you didn't see any commercials poking at him while everybody else was busy going after each other. And, Doeden took his shots, you know, he leveled attacks at them, you know, the 'Jailhouse Jon Hansen, ' weak on crime attack, that came out of Toby Doeden's camp. You know, and he had other attacks on Dusty and Larry Rhoden. You know, Dusty had outside groups coming in, and he was kind of stung by votes he's managed to get a pass on from voters before, such as the, you know, his vote for the January 6th investigation, and a vote to reject what was a kind of an atypical funding mechanism for the border wall. It was just kind of outside what was normally done, and they didn't think it was necessarily constitutional. So, you know, he rejected that funding, but voted for it every other time. Now, keep in mind, since these things he was getting hit with, you know, Trump had endorsed Dusty for Congress since those votes. So, obviously, there was no problem with it. But the outside group, you know, they used those to great effect, to drive Dusty's numbers down. And so, everybody is out there being defined, you know, the hits against Rhoden, the hits against Jon Hansen, the hits against Dusty, they were being defined. So, and, at the same time, nobody was defining Toby. So, he had complete autonomy to define himself, and you know, his commercials were effective in doing so. I mean, they might have been very practiced and rote, and they, the commercials, didn't deviate from any other speech he's given, but, you know, he got them to sink in, and nobody was taking the bark off him. So, you've got a situation where he's got full autonomy, and it showed. I mean, he won.

O'BRIEN: And so now this becomes a contest between Rhoden, who is kind of an established political figure in South Dakota now, and Toby Doeden, who hasn't been elected to office. When I spoke with Rhoden after at his watch party, he had mentioned that this kind of gives him that clear contrast to kind of have between him and Doeden. I'm just curious, I guess, what you think about that comment.

POWERS: Well, I think, I mean, if you look at it, I'm looking at it as where they fell on the spectrum. You know, 69% of voters voted against Toby. 75% of voters voted against Larry. Now, now they've got to come bring those others back and try to put together winning numbers. You know, many of the traditional Republican financial backers who'd backed like Dusty's campaign, and some of the Hansen ones as well, you know, they're going to shift over naturally to Larry, but, money has not been a barrier for Toby Doeden. He can just write a check. So, you know, it's going to be whoever can run the most effective campaign. You know, right? And so you've got 45% of supporters out there who are, of the other candidates, who are in the wind, and I find it interesting that the two campaigns who had a much more effective ground game than Governor Rhoden or Toby Doeden, those are the campaigns that lost, and so, their supporters are adrift. And that ground game element is kind of what the Rhoden and the Doeden teams need to capture, because you've got a few signs out there for Larry. Toby relied primarily on TV. I mean, driving across the state, you don't really see much for Toby Doeden signs anywhere. And so, that ground game is what both of them lack, and then both of them kind of need to capture.

O'BRIEN: With that too, then, what do you think didn't work out of Hansen's and Johnson's campaigns?

POWERS: Well, I don't know that it was something that didn't work. I think it was just, as I said, the, you know, there were a lot of, a lot of negative attacks on them. There were attacks from them. And, you know, what didn't work was, you know, the attacks against them were a little more effective. You know, I don't know that, if anything, it was maybe just a miscalculation of resources, of, you know, maybe they should have been going after Toby Doeden when they didn't. You know, again, if nobody's going after the

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candidate who eventually wins, maybe he should have been the one you were going after in the first place.

O'BRIEN: And so when we're looking back on the campaigns, and even back to the legislative session, property taxes and sales tax and all of that good stuff was quite the conversation. It was really what was brought up throughout debates. It's been kind of that factor. How big of a factor do you think it was throughout these campaigns?

POWERS: Well, I mean, that was one of the big topics of discussion, property taxes. You know, you had Toby out there claiming he's going to get rid of all property taxes, which, you know, good luck with that. I don't like paying them either, but what are you going to replace it with? You know, Larry, and again, you know, as the commercial said, Larry and Jon Hansen worked on a plan to replace some of the property taxes with new sales taxes. You know, and they certainly took a hit for it, because you can flavor it any way you want. It's a tax shift, and the only way you get it is with new taxes. And, you know, that I don't think helped them. But, you know, here we are, and this will be an argument that the candidates will be having with each other for the next eight weeks.

O'BRIEN: And you've mentioned too, I mean, as this runoff kind of goes on, Doeden can kind of write a check for whatever he needs. How do you think that campaign finances played into this?

POWERS: Oh, you know, I think campaign finance was a part of it. But obviously, you know, Dusty had as much money as he needed at his disposal from a significant war chest. I mean, I think it came to the point where you could spend anything, but it's hard to put the airtime together. It gets hard to break through. You know, we are in a position where we get so many ad impressions at a time, you know, at what point does it just become noise? I mean, campaign finances are going to probably be a factor in the runoff, but I think a lot of the people who had donated to Dusty, and maybe even to some degree to Jon Hansen, they're going to, they're going to back Larry, you know, and, I mean, Doeden isn't out there doing a lot of fundraising or any fundraising. So he's obviously not worried about that. You know, he was on the air as much as anybody. And, I mean, a campaign is about building name ID. I always, when I talk to candidates, and I advise candidates, you know, I talk about the 'know, like, trust' test. And most candidates don't get past the 'know' part. And the 'know' part is just pure name ID. And, you know, Toby has obviously gotten his name out there enough where he got 31% of Republican voters to, to vote for him. So, they felt they knew who he was, and what he stood for.

O'BRIEN: And we also saw all four of these candidates try to align themselves with Trump in one way or another. Do you think that that played a role in who got which votes?

POWERS: I don't, you know, I don't know that it did, in that, that's just kind of the space that everybody in the Republican Party is operating in, at this point. You know, nobody is out there running as the anti-Trump candidate, cause Trump is very popular in South Dakota. I mean, he does very well here, he polls well here. You know, in the Republican primary, being the anti-Trump candidate is not somebody you want to be. And, you know, that's one thing they tried to paint Dusty with, and, you know, that did not help his case.

O'BRIEN: And so then as we're going forward, especially with Dusty Johnson, I mean, he's had experience working with former Gov. Dennis Daugaard. He's served on the Public Utilities Commission. He's been in Congress for eight years now, or coming up on eight years. What do you think his legacy is?

POWERS: You know, Dusty's legacy has always been about good governance. You know, he's, he will admit he's, he's a policy wonk, and finding solutions to problems has been something he has worked on from day one of his political career and continues to do to this day in Congress. You know, there's lots of problems out there to solve, and, you know, Dusty is less about the rhetoric and more about finding a solution.

O'BRIEN: What do you think is next for him?

POWERS: You know, I think the world is his oyster right now. I, you know, I've never seen anyone who is poorer from the experience. I mean, I think Dusty can do anything he wants. You know, and, if you're talking in terms of political races, you know, politics and running is all about, you know, it's about timing opportunity, and maybe there will be an opportunity here in the future, whether it's now or two years or

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four years from now, you know, are we going to find ourselves looking for a problem solver? Or is Dusty going to want to go back into the private sector? You know, I don't know, and I think he hasn't figured that out yet. So, there's, you know, I think, give him a little time, he'll find something to do.

O'BRIEN: And so, as we're going into this runoff, do you anticipate Hansen's and Johnson's supporters going one way or another? Do you see them kind of splitting off? What are you kind of envisioning for that?

POWERS: Well, you know, and it's interesting, both of those teams are just up for grabs. You know, on election night, Toby was claiming, well, Dusty's people are going to him, and he's going to be, he's going to be talking with them in the morning. Well, I talked to Dusty's people in the morning, and they, they kind of laughed at that, said, no, I haven't heard anything from Toby yet. So, and then you also have Hansen's people who, if you watched any of the online chatter on Facebook, you know, they were literally at war with Toby's people online, and you haven't seen Jon Hansen give them any direction. But, by the same token, nobody's really jumping right away over to Larry immediately either. I mean, I think it's going to take a little time and outreach. I mean, I think, at least some of those in the Sioux Falls area are more interested in working on that mayoral runoff at the moment, as opposed to jumping right back into the gubernatorial campaign. And we'll probably know more, I would say, by the Republican convention, because that mayoral runoff in Sioux Falls is the Tuesday before the Republican convention. So, by convention, we'll kind of know what, what a lot of those people are doing and what they're interested in. And I, I think that'll be kind of more of the touch point. And that's kind of halfway to the eight-week runoff. You know, I think for Larry and for Toby, right now, probably their biggest task is putting in the framework to seal the deal, and trying to figure out, OK, I've got to put together a statewide campaign. Which, you know, they've already got, but, you know, they're missing that ground game element. So, they need to figure out a way to put together an army of supporters and organize them and send them out to spread the message for the people who didn't go with them from the TV commercials or text messages.

O'BRIEN: And what topics do you anticipate kind of becoming the focus of this runoff?

POWERS: Oh, I suspect that just like the primary election, they'll probably focus on property taxes. You know, Larry will say he solved it, and Toby will say we need to get rid of them, and, you know, they'll maybe get into a little more semantics from there. And they'll probably talk about cuts and things like that, but I think property taxes will continue to be the focus.

O'BRIEN: Advance voting for the Republican runoff is underway. Voter registration is open through July 13th. The special election is July 28th.

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

COMMENTARY

Before you 'Save South Dakota,' show us the fire

by Brad Johnson

South Dakota is being told it needs saving. Not tuning. Not reform. Saving.

That word isn't a diagnosis. It's a marketing slogan — the kind you roll out when you need voters to believe they're living in a disaster movie and only one man has the script.

Into this imaginary smoke steps Republican governor candidate Toby Doeden, claiming to hear alarms no one else can hear and insisting he alone knows how to put out the fire. A bold claim, considering most South Dakotans didn't smell smoke until his yard signs told them to grab a bucket.

Those signs shout: "Save SD."

Save it from what?

Save it from whom?

Those are the first questions any serious voter should ask when a politician declares an emergency.

But before anyone accepts the premise that the state is in danger, the next question is simpler: Where is the fire, and who started it? Because if you're asking voters to believe the state is burning, then you're accusing someone of being the arsonist. And that accusation demands evidence.

There isn't any.

South Dakota has one of the nation's lowest unemployment rates, and its population has grown by roughly 120,000 people since 2010. People generally don't move to places they believe are failing.

Recent migration research shows South Dakota continues to attract younger residents from outside its borders, with newcomers averaging about 30 years old and nearly a decade younger than those leaving.

That is not what a state in collapse looks like. It is what a state looks like when people are choosing it.

Yet Doeden's campaign insists South Dakota needs saving. Taken seriously, the slogan implies something dramatic has gone wrong and someone is responsible.

Let's follow that logic.

For decades, Republicans have controlled the governor's office, dominated the Legislature and held nearly every statewide office. If South Dakota is burning, the people running the state have had nearly half a century to smell the smoke. The establishment Doeden criticizes wasn't imposed on South Dakota by outsiders. It was built here through decades of elections.

If Pierre is burning, who has been running the fire department all this time?

The answer is not simply "the establishment." South Dakotans repeatedly chose the leaders and policies that produced today's state. And those voters are not powerless.

In 2024, voters removed a significant number of incumbent Republican legislators. In this year's primary,



A campaign sign for Toby Doeden, a Republican candidate for governor of South Dakota. (Photo by Brad Johnson/for South Dakota Searchlight)

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they removed more — including some they had elected only two years earlier.

Two cycles. Two course corrections. South Dakota voters are not passengers on a runaway train. They are driving it.

Which raises the question that the “Save SD” narrative never answers: If voters are already holding lawmakers accountable, what exactly needs saving?

The same logic applies to spending.

Doeden argues government spends too much. Many voters may agree. But the state’s largest expenses aren’t hidden programs. They are schools, healthcare, corrections and transportation — basic government functions voters demanded.

Public education is constitutionally required. Medicaid expansion was approved by voters. Corrections spending reflects decades of support for tougher sentencing. Roads and rural infrastructure exist because South Dakotans chose to maintain communities spread across 77,000 square miles.

The cost of rural government is not a flaw in South Dakota’s model. It is a consequence of the model itself.

Which leads to an uncomfortable truth: Maybe the target of “Save SD” isn’t government. Maybe it’s the choices South Dakotans have made.

Because those choices built the state we have today. And that South Dakota — the real one, not the one in campaign ads — is not in need of rescue.

Doeden’s own success may be the strongest argument against his slogan. He didn’t build his business empire in a failing state. He built it in Aberdeen — under South Dakota laws, inside the state’s economy and within the very system he now argues needs saving. His success enabled him to invest millions of dollars of his own money in a gubernatorial campaign.

That doesn’t prove South Dakota is perfect. But it makes it hard to argue that the place that produced his success is on the verge of collapse.

South Dakota has real challenges. Property taxes, housing costs, workforce shortages, government efficiency — all deserve debate. But there is a difference between fixing problems and declaring an emergency.

Before voters decide whether South Dakota needs saving, they deserve more than a slogan. They deserve evidence.

What exactly is burning? Who lit the match? Why did no one sound the alarm until a campaign needed a villain?

Those are the questions “Save SD” doesn’t answer. That is the slogan’s fatal flaw. It asks voters to believe South Dakota is in crisis without ever proving there is one.

If South Dakota isn’t burning, then the only smoke in the air is the smoke someone is blowing to sell a crisis.

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

What you need to know about the flesh-eating New World screwworm

Now that the invasive pest is in the country, here's what it could mean for you and your pocketbook

BY: KEVIN HARDY

The New World screwworm has arrived in the United States.

For years, ranchers across Southern states have prepared for a potential invasion of the flesh-eating parasite that can wreak havoc on livestock, pets and even humans.

Though the United States went decades without a confirmed case of the invasive pest, it's now made its way across the U.S.-Mexico border. Officials have confirmed one case in a New Mexico dog and five cases in Texas, including cattle, a dog and a goat.

The New World screwworm poses potentially life-threatening risks to pets, wildlife and livestock. While the risk is concentrated in a few states, experts say a massive invasion could ripple across the American economy through higher grocery prices.



Larvae hatch from New World screwworm eggs within about 24 hours before burrowing into the infested animal's wound to feed on living flesh. (Photo courtesy of USDA)

Is it a fly or a worm?

Contrary to its name, the screwworm grows into an adult fly that's about the size of a common housefly. The adult fly has orange eyes, a metallic blue or green body, and three dark stripes along the back.

The name screwworm refers to the larvae (maggots) that burrow into open wounds, feeding as they go "like a screw being driven into wood," according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The maggots burrow into the flesh of living animals through wounds as small as a tick bite or in body openings such as the eyes or nose. That means ranchers must keep close watch over newborn calves with exposed umbilical cords and may need to rethink branding and tagging operations that could provide an entry for the pests.

What to look for

The screwworm can infest livestock, pets, wildlife, birds and, in rare cases, people.

Infested animals can exhibit foul-smelling wounds with visible maggots as well as lesions in navels, ears or other sites. Texas A&M says animals may bite or lick at wounds and could display unusual restlessness or lethargy.

"Pay attention to your animals, pay attention to any wildlife that might be around your property, if they're acting like they're in distress," New Mexico Livestock Board Executive Director Belinda Garland told Source New Mexico this week. "Be aware, but there's no need to panic."

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says people may feel or see maggots moving within a wound, or in their ears, noses, eyes or mouth. The larvae can cause painful sores that worsen within a few days. People may also experience bleeding and a foul-smelling odor from the site of the infestation.

People should immediately see a healthcare provider, who must remove each maggot, sometimes surgically, the CDC says.

For animals, USDA has approved emergency use of several medications for prevention and treatment

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of the parasite. Those include ivermectin, the drug that many people hoarded for off-label use during the coronavirus pandemic.

Will this cost me?

The New World screwworm could raise prices at the grocery store. In fact, it probably already has: American beef prices are near record highs after ranchers liquidated herds to the smallest level in 75 years because of drought and other operating disruptions, including a halt on cattle imports from Mexico.

In an effort to stop the screwworm, the U.S. banned live Mexican cattle imports, which traditionally occupy American pastures and feedlots before going to slaughter. Last month, David Anderson, professor and extension specialist in livestock and food product marketing at Texas A&M University, told Stateline that the move likely exacerbated meat prices.

Beef prices have increased faster than inflation in recent months, according to the most recent consumer price index report. While ground beef prices fell 1.27% in May, that drop followed a 2.7% increase in April, CNBC reported, and beef prices remain up 12.9% year over year.

The pest could also impact dairy supplies, according to the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. While ranchers can hold back cattle during an outbreak, dairies may be forced to dump milk during an outbreak.

What's being done to stop it?

USDA has created screwworm monitoring, reporting and quarantine protocols for animals. But because the disease does not create food safety concerns, the agency will not stop any movement of animal products, including meat.

To eradicate the flies, the federal government plans to breed sterile male flies and then release them into areas with established populations. The sterilized males will mate with females, which will then lay unfertilized eggs. With females mating only once in their lifespan, officials say this method progressively reduces and eliminates the fly population.

USDA just broke ground on a \$750 million sterile fly facility in Edinburg, Texas, that aims to produce up to 300 million sterile flies per week when it opens next year. The agency has also invested in sterile fly facilities in Mexico and Panama.

Political blame game

The arrival of the screwworm has ignited political attacks from Washington, D.C., to the Southern border.

At a U.S. Senate oversight hearing earlier this week, Minnesota Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar raised concerns about how deep cuts to USDA employment affected the department's ability to combat issues such as the screwworm threat. She noted that the department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service lost 25% of its staff, including more than 300 veterinary services employees.

The Trump administration has sought to deflect blame on previous President Joe Biden.

In that same hearing, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins blamed the previous administration and Mexican cartels' "refusal to crack down" for allowing the screwworm to migrate north.

"Everyone took their eye off the ball years ago, and unfortunately, because of the border policies, it's coming our way," Rollins said.

Meanwhile, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller has called on the federal government to deploy targeted baits that kill screwworm flies before they reproduce. Miller recently lost his GOP primary for reelection.

"The science is settled. The tools are available," Miller said in a news release this week. "What's missing is urgency from the USDA."

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org.

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Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

Details on removal of nuclear materials from Iran to be worked out as deal to end war nears

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration still needs to determine how it will remove nuclear materials from Iran after officials from both countries sign documents to end the war, a senior official said Friday.

"This is very combustible stuff, very volatile stuff. We're not just going to, like, go down there with a backhoe and a guy with a backpack and start taking it out," the official, who did not want to be identified by name, said on a call with reporters organized by the White House. "The technical details need to be figured out, but I think there's a commitment to do that."

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi wrote in a social media post a few hours before the call that a memorandum of understanding with the United States "has never been closer."

"Pending its finalization, the media should refrain from entering speculation about its content," he added. "In line with our responsible and transparent approach, all details will be shared with the public in due course."

The officials' comments came one day after President Donald Trump said negotiators had "just made a great settlement of the war with Iran" that would be "subject to finalization of documents" over the next few days.



A view of the damaged B1 bridge, a day after it was destroyed by an airstrike, on April 3, 2026 west of Tehran in Karaj, Iran.

(Photo by Majid Saeedi/Getty Images)

Possible meeting in Europe

The U.S. official said the administration is 80% to 85% sure leaders from the two countries would gather sometime this month to sign a memorandum of understanding to end the war, possibly in Europe.

Those documents will create a framework to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, destroy enriched nuclear materials and establish inspections to ensure Iran doesn't possess a nuclear weapon, the official said.

The MOU will also start a 60-day technical negotiation where leaders from both countries work out more specifics of what the United States wants to see Iran accomplish in order to lift economic sanctions, the official said.

The step-by-step process with verification requirements is designed to build trust and "accomplish something meaningful for both Iran and the United States of America," the official said.

"I don't think the Iranians trust us and I don't think the United States trusts the Iranians," the official said.

Whether or not Iran could have a civilian nuclear program for energy production will remain to be seen, though the official didn't entirely rule it out.

"We're not bothered at all by the idea of civilian power plants in Iran," the official said. "What we're bothered by is the type of infrastructure that would allow them to jump from civilian power generation to nuclear weapons development and that's what they've had for a very long time."

Ashley Murray contributed to this report.

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

Judge allows UFC cage matches to go ahead on White House lawn

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

The Ultimate Fighting Championship cage matches set to take place on the White House South Lawn on Sunday will go on as scheduled, a federal judge in Washington, D.C., ruled Friday.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta denied an emergency petition from two Virginia plaintiffs to stop the fight until the court litigates allegations that the Trump administration illegally allowed the Las Vegas-based sports promotion company to build its towering structure, called "The Claw," on the White House grounds, and use the Ellipse and Lincoln Memorial for related events.

UFC began constructing the 92-foot-tall, 154-foot-wide steel staging area on May 26, and corporate organizers were placing the final touches on the temporary 4,300-seat structure this week.

According to government court filings, organizers expect up to 120,000 guests to watch the fights on large screens on the Ellipse in addition to the guests under "The Claw."

In all, organizers have spent \$60 million on preparation for the event, which is part of the Donald Trump administration-organized "Freedom 250" celebration — separate and apart from the bipartisan "America250" governed by a congressional commission — to mark the country's 250th anniversary.

In a 15-page order, Mehta wrote that the plaintiffs' "unreasonable delay in filing suit, though not dispositive, undercuts their claims of irreparable harm."

"The public has known that the White House would be hosting a UFC fight event since President Trump first announced it in July 2025. Equipment and materials for the event began arriving at the White House around May 20, 2026, ... and construction of the Claw began six days later. Plaintiffs, however, waited until June 7, 2026 — more than two weeks after visible preparations commenced at the White House — to seek emergency relief," according to the order.

Additionally, Mehta wrote that the plaintiffs' claims of harm — aesthetic and First Amendment — are not irreparable because they are "decidedly temporary."



The Ultimate Fighting Championship branded its upcoming mix martial arts fight on the White House South Lawn, on Thursday, June 11, 2026, as a celebration of America's 250th birthday. (Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

White House spokesperson Davis Ingle praised the ruling.

"The court rightly rejected an untimely and frivolous effort to halt the historic UFC event hosted to honor the 250th anniversary of our Nation. The White House is thankful for this correct decision and looks forward to hosting this once-in-a-lifetime celebration on the South Lawn," Ingle said in a written statement to States Newsroom.

Brendan Ballou, founder of the Public Integrity Project, an anti-corruption legal advocacy organization that represented the plaintiffs, said the decision wasn't the one they wanted.

"This isn't a case about a sporting event, it's about corruption, as a handful of people and companies stand to profit from our public monuments. While we're disappointed in this decision, we of course respect it, and we'll keep bringing cases to raise the cost of corruption in America," Ballou said in a written statement to States Newsroom.

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

Judge blocks Trump's 'anti-weaponization' fund until government agrees it's been dissolved

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A federal judge in the Eastern District of Virginia issued a preliminary injunction Friday halting the Trump administration's nearly \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund for one week, giving the government time to sign a "clear, unambiguous" agreement that the fund is dead.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema said from the bench the agreement must be signed by acting Attorney General Todd Blanche and Treasury Secretary Scott Besent.

"The balance of harms tips in the favor of the plaintiff," said Brinkema, a Clinton administration appointee.

Brinkema had already temporarily blocked the fund on May 29 on an emergency basis.

The prospect that the fund would pay Trump's supporters, including those who assaulted police officers during the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot, sparked multiple lawsuits, including the filing in Virginia.

Challengers included a former Department of Justice Jan. 6 prosecutor who was fired last year and a protester at an immigration raid last year who was charged with a felony, and has since been acquitted by a jury. The plaintiffs are represented by the legal advocacy groups Democracy Forward and Common Cause.

The Department of Justice announced the creation of the fund, in the amount of \$1.776 billion, on May 18 in exchange for President Donald Trump voluntarily dropping his \$10 billion lawsuit against the IRS for the leak of his tax returns nearly seven years ago.



President Donald Trump gives a speech at the World Economic Forum on Jan. 21, 2026 in Davos, Switzerland. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

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Issue not moot, judge says

During a hearing that lasted less than an hour, Brinkema swiftly called Andrew Block, senior counsel to the U.S. associate attorney general, to speak first.

"You're a brave man, Mr. Block. You're all by yourself. Frankly, you're in the hot seat," Brinkema said, noting that Block was the only representative for the government in the courtroom.

Brinkema kicked off questioning by asking Block if he'd had a chance to find an answer to why Blanche has not formally rescinded the "anti-weaponization" fund in writing.

The question had been posed to Block by U.S. District Judge Richard Leon in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia less than 48 hours ago during a hearing for a separate lawsuit against the fund. Block, who also appeared alone before Leon, told the judge he did not know the reason Blanche had not issued a written order.

"Do you have an answer to that question now?" Brinkema asked.

"Your honor, I don't. I don't have the ability to speak to the AG," he responded.

As he did in federal court June 10, Block argued that Blanche testified publicly before Congress that the administration was not moving forward with the fund, and that Blanche had signed legal briefs on the matter.

Acknowledging those arguments, Leon denied an emergency request to block the fund, saying the case appeared "moot."

Brinkema, however, said she does not agree with Leon's assessment.

Doubting whether any of Blanche's verbal or written statements to stop the fund had been made under penalty of perjury, Brinkema said, "that means the issue, in my view, is not moot."

Brinkema also cited Trump's public comments praising the fund, even after Blanche's declaration it would not move forward.

"When the president of the United States says he's going to be disappointed if something doesn't happen, that's a pretty good indication that it (could) happen," Brinkema said.

"There are a lot of people out there who think this fund is up and running," she added.

Block responded: "People may think a lot of things." He said "what I can tell you" is that no commissioners have been appointed to the fund to establish a claim system.

No lawful business restrained

Block, as he did before Judge Leon, dismissed the plaintiffs' allegations as "what-ifs," based on a "loose factual record that is premature."

Referring to the departments of Justice and Treasury, Brinkema asked, "What injury do they face if the court issues a preliminary injunction at this point?"

Block argued any temporary order to block the fund would mean the government was being "restrained" in conducting business.

"You think this is lawful business? This is a serious issue," Brinkema said, adding the "only reason this fund exists" is because it's a settlement in the president's IRS case, which is "under severe scrutiny."

U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams, in the Southern District of Florida, has asked for the government's response by day's end to a May 27 request from 35 former federal judges to reopen the case. The judges allege the government deceived the court by not sharing all details of the settlement.

Blanche on Capitol Hill

The Department of Justice declined to comment Friday.

The department maintains the fund does not exist, based on Blanche's June 2 statements before a House Appropriations subcommittee that the department was "not moving forward with the fund, period."

Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, wrote in a statement the "ruling is a significant victory for the Constitution, the rule of law, and people in America."

"The court recognized the serious legal concerns raised by the Trump-Vance administration's attempt to create a secretive, taxpayer-funded compensation program," she continued. "Despite the administration's

shifting explanations about the future of the slush fund, the court's order ensures that taxpayer dollars cannot be distributed through this unlawful scheme while the courts fully consider the serious constitutional issues at stake."

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

Corporate logos abound on White House grounds in prep for fights by Trump-allied UFC

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Advertisements for Polymarket and Bud Light lined an eight-sided cage on the White House grounds Thursday ahead of a series of mixed martial arts fights scheduled for Sunday, President Donald Trump's 80th birthday, and billed as a celebration of America's 250th birthday.

The Las Vegas-based Ultimate Fighting Championship company, whose chief executive is an ally of the president's, will stage the seven-fight card that has drawn curiosity, outrage, a legal challenge and lots of money.

The organization, led by Dana White, who delivered prime-time speeches for Trump at the last three Republican National Conventions, is expecting over 65,000 fans at the two-day festival on the Ellipse beginning Saturday.

The event reportedly cost \$60 million, according to a government court filing. VIP sponsorship packages, including a chance to sit cage-side under "the claw" on the lawn of what's often referred to as "The People's House," could cost up to the widely reported price tag of \$1.5 million.

Corporate organizers were laying finishing touches this week on a 92-foot red, white and blue structure that towers over the White House and reaches a radius around the fighting "octagon" — still under protective covering — to fit roughly 4,300 exclusive seats.

Space for tens of thousands more spectators who can watch the fights on large screens is designated on the Ellipse, which will be open only to ticketholders and UFC-approved media. Up to 120,000 fans who scored free tickets in a lottery are expected, according to the administration. Additionally, the administration has invited 1,000 members of the armed services.

The event, which is billing itself as "UFC Freedom 250," is not affiliated with the national nonpartisan



An Ultimate Fighting Championship ring on the White House South Lawn on Thursday, June 11, 2026. (Photo by Ashley Murray/States

Newsroom)

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organization America 250, a commission created by Congress to mark the nation's semiquincentennial.

A June 10 promotional UFC article described the event as a "celebration of how far mixed martial arts has come and how deeply the UFC has embedded itself into mainstream sports and culture."

The main card will feature lightweight title champion Ilia Topuria up against interim champion Justin Gaethje and a heavyweight title fight between Alex Pereira and Ciryl Gane.

The advertising blitz on grounds owned by the federal government has inspired accusations of corruption. Brendan Ballou, founder of the Public Integrity Project, which is suing to stop the event, said the main purpose is "to enrich the President and his friends."

Corporate tie-ins

The event has provided corporate advertising opportunities, including for companies with close ties to Trump, and "came together by special invite from the President of the United States," according to UFC's press materials.

Dodge and Crypto.com are primary sponsors. Dodge is heavily promoting its line of Ram trucks at the event and Crypto.com will offer a \$1 million in Cronos, the company's digital currency, bonus pool to the evening's top fighters.

The fight will stream on Paramount Plus, the platform owned by Paramount Skydance, the mega-media company whose high-profile 2025 merger the Trump administration approved. UFC recently reached a \$7.7 billion deal with the streamer giving it exclusive streaming rights for seven years.

The White House collaborated with sports apparel company Fanatics to create an exclusive "USA 250" patch and logo that will be featured on fighters' uniforms and on merchandise for sale, according to the UFC.

The "Octagon girls," scantily clad young women who are fight mainstays and promoted by the company, "will wear a variety of custom outfits that will align with the overall theme of UFC FREEDOM 250 and further celebrate America's history," according to press materials.

Trump has made no secret of his support for the MMA fight promotion company owned by his friend. He began promising a UFC fight on the White House lawn while on the campaign trail in 2024.

The president purchased between \$15,000 and \$50,000 of stock in TKO Group Holdings, UFC's parent company, in March, according to public reporting and court filings.

In April, as Vice President JD Vance was in Pakistan wrapping up failed peace negotiations to end the U.S.-Iran war, Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio appeared together at a UFC cage match in Miami.

A press conference is scheduled for the event Friday at the Lincoln Memorial and the Georgia-based Zac Brown Band is set to perform Saturday night, according to a court filing from the government.

Block attempt

Critics have panned the event as a "corrupt scheme," and some are hoping for a last-minute court order to stop the event altogether.

The nationwide anti-Trump organization No Kings has partnered with the Committee for the First Amendment to host and livestream a concert from New York City that will feature Patti Smith, Rufus Wainwright and Bette Midler.

The groups are encouraging people to organize watch parties for the concert, which will occur at the same time as the "UFC cage fight spectacle," No Kings organizers said in a statement.

The Public Integrity Project, an anti-corruption advocacy organization, is backing two Virginians who say the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior are illegally lending out the public land for a massive event without permission from Congress and necessary environmental reviews.

"If this fight is allowed to proceed, it will be only the beginning, and our national monuments will become little more than branding opportunities for the rich and well-connected. We plan to stop that," Ballou said in a statement June 6 upon filing the lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The plaintiffs, a Vietnam War veteran and a civic activist, requested an emergency order from the court to halt the fight while the case plays out.

Legal decision coming

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta, an Obama appointee, issued an order Thursday stating he would not schedule an emergency hearing but rather decide based on written briefs.

In its response, the Trump administration dismissed the lawsuit as meritless, and noted that it did not name UFC as a defendant. Department of Justice lawyers wrote the plaintiffs are "two individuals: one who plans to walk past the event (intentionally 'coming to the nuisance') and another who might happen to drive past it."

"Two Plaintiffs with idiosyncratic preferences cannot use equity to upend an event of this cost and magnitude at the last minute and spoil the evenings of tens of thousands of other Americans who wish to celebrate their pride in their country in a manner that Plaintiffs disdain," the DOJ argued.

"No one is holding Plaintiffs in a jiu jitsu lock, forcing them to watch UFC Freedom 250 against their will," the brief continued. "The public interest does not favor allowing them to exercise a heckler's veto, particularly at this late date."

The White House, which has referred all questions about the event to the UFC, did not immediately respond to a request for comment about Mehta's decision to not hold a hearing.

The UFC did not respond to questions, including a request for comment on the pending lawsuit, the cost of the event and sponsorship packages, how many tickets have been sold and if the organization has a weather contingency plan for possible storms.

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

As AI use in schools grows, lawmakers and districts scramble to set up guardrails

Many districts still lack clear guidance for teachers and students

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA

With many students and educators already using widely available artificial intelligence tools, state lawmakers and school districts are playing catch-up on AI policies.

In Maryland, for example, AI usage policies for K-12 schools are "all over the map," Democratic state Sen. Katie Fry Hester said.

In some school districts, she said, AI use is encouraged, while in others it is restricted, or — a worst-case scenario for Hester — there is little to no policy guidance at all.

"What we heard repeatedly is that the teachers were feeling like they had to navigate artificial intelligence entirely on their own," Hester said.

Hester said square one for lawmakers is AI literacy, which was the aim of new legislation that she sponsored and that was signed into law in May. It requires an AI coordinator in each school system, a statewide AI professional development for teachers and AI literacy to be a component of career readiness and computer science standards for K-12 students. It also requires the state Department of Education to provide certain guidance on AI.

Many other states have also been trying to create AI policies for schools. Lawmakers filed more than 134 bills across 31 states this year related to AI in education, focusing on data privacy, usage restriction in the classroom, literacy and training, according to MultiState, a government relations firm.

A survey by the Center for Democracy & Technology showed that a large majority of teachers (85%) reported using AI in their classroom during the 2024-25 school year, while 86% of students said they'd used AI for either personal or school-related reasons. But only about half of teachers and students reported that they received some training or information about AI from someone at their school, and few received training

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or information on risks of AI use.

A turning point for schools came with the rollout of ChatGPT in 2022, said Noelle Ellerson Ng, chief advocacy and governance officer for the School Superintendents Association. "AI was something that could not be gatekept," said Ellerson Ng. "It was in the classroom the minute students were able to access it."

Her association does not take positions on state AI bills or policies. But she said districts are trying to avoid knee-jerk, reactive policies such as New York City's brief 2022 ban of ChatGPT because of fears about cheating.

Some states have made progress in laying the groundwork for AI policy in K-12.

Ohio has set a July 1 deadline for every school district, community school and STEM school

to adopt an AI use policy. The state's model policy recommends that districts address student and staff uses, privacy, ethical use, teacher-specific uses, vendor agreements, third-party AI tools and student assessments.

A new Idaho law signed in March requires local school districts and charter schools to devise local policies for AI usage in K-12 schools, requires state standards for AI literacy and education training and ensures that no AI "replaces or eliminates a human teacher."

An Oklahoma law enacted last month requires AI tools to be age-appropriate and requires teachers to review anything AI produces before using it in the classroom. It also allows parents to opt their children out of using AI tools. The law also directs the state education department to develop AI guidance and requires local school boards to set policies before the 2027-28 school year.

Yet even as schools are being sold on AI products by numerous vendors, there's a growing skepticism about AI in classrooms. It follows a similar backlash about social media and digital technology's academic and mental health effects on students, which has led to more states and districts putting in place cellphone bans and rethinking their reliance on laptops.

In the Center for Democracy & Technology survey, half of students said using AI in class made them feel less connected to their teachers, and 70% of teachers said they were concerned that students' use of AI was preventing them from learning important skills.

Schools need to weigh the benefits of adopting AI tools in the classroom against their effect on student privacy, mental health and social skills, said Sue Thotz, director of outreach for Common Sense Media, a nonprofit advocacy group focused on technology and its effect on children and families.

Schools, Thotz said, may be the "only mandated safe space" where students can learn to use and access emerging technology. But she and other education experts believe districts need to increase scrutiny of products.

Globally, the market for AI products in K-12 schools was worth around \$391.2 million in 2024, and could rise to more than \$9 billion by 2034, according to market.us, a market research company. That includes AI



Students work in a classroom in Salt Lake City in 2024. As AI use in schools grows, more lawmakers and districts aim to put guidelines in place. (Photo by Spenser Heaps for Utah News Dispatch)

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products for tutoring, personalized learning, automated grading, lesson planning and administrative tasks. "When I talk about AI literacy, it's not how to use AI. It's understanding how AI is built," said Thotz. "Why is it being created? Who's profiting off of this?"

'Giving a tool to children'

New York Assemblymember Robert Carroll said he uses artificial intelligence in his own work and sees its value. As someone who struggled with dyslexia as a child, he also thinks technology can help students with disabilities.

But he also wants to keep AI out of most K-8 classroom instruction. Students should learn basic subject matter first — in conjunction with critical thinking — and then later use the tools that can assist them, he said.

Carroll, a Democrat, has introduced legislation that would prohibit the use of most AI in K-8 classrooms, with exceptions for diagnostic testing and support for students with disabilities.

"It is imperative that all children gain strong foundational skills, especially in literacy and numeracy, and it seems that AI is uniquely positioned to possibly undermine that," he said. "There's a difference between giving a tool to adults and giving a tool to children who have yet to master skills."

Rather than full bans, most bills seeking to restrict AI have opted to focus on age restrictions, parental opt-outs, oversight and bans on using AI to replace teachers.

This year, Florida's "AI Bill of Rights" proposal would have included a statewide restriction on student access to AI instructional tools before sixth grade, with exceptions for use supervised by school personnel, English-learner translation support and disability accommodations. It overwhelmingly passed the Senate 37-1, but died in the House.

A new Connecticut law adds computer science to the required public school curriculum, including AI and emerging technologies. Connecticut lawmakers in 2025 failed to pass a bill aiming to stop AI from "replacing" public school educators.

Sophia Romee, the general manager of the GenAI Studio, an initiative studying how students and educators use generative AI at the College Board, the nonprofit that administers the Advanced Placement curriculum and SAT tests for high schools, said she is concerned that only about 1 in 5 districts that allow students to use generative AI have a formal policy governing its use.

The College Board's research, Romee said, shows many students are worried about becoming too reliant on AI, and that adults need to give clearer guidance about where using AI tools for brainstorming, revising and tutoring crosses the ethical line into cheating.

"Students are far more self-aware about AI's risks than headlines suggest."

Like aviation in 1905

Jason Coley, director of the Center for Academic Innovation at Maria College in Albany, New York, said the policy debate needs to move beyond whether schools are "for" or "against" the use of AI.

"The better question is what kinds of AI use are supervised, age appropriate, transparent, and tied to real learning," Coley said. Schools need guardrails around privacy, student data, bias, teacher training and equity of access, he said, but also permission to "experiment responsibly."

Ellerson Ng, of the School Superintendents Association, said superintendents see AI as part of a larger umbrella of disruptive technologies in schools that has evolved from calculators to laptops to cellphones. The lesson, she said, is that overreactive policy rarely works. She also said schools should not cover AI in a separate policy, but as part of a broader technology policy.

"I don't have a calculator policy. Why would I have an AI policy?" she said, describing how some district leaders think about the issue. "I have a technology policy."

With past technologies such as cellphones and laptops, adults could often control when students had access, Ellerson Ng said. With AI apps and platforms, many students accessed the tools before teachers, principals or state officials were even aware of them.

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That makes bans difficult, she said. Schools can block tools on school-owned devices and networks, but “you’re only one personal device away from social media and AI being in your schools.”

Justin Reich, an associate professor of digital media at MIT, said that uncertainty around AI should make policymakers cautious about declaring best practices too soon.

Reich said states are trying to regulate classroom AI at a moment when the field is still so unstable that “writing a guide for AI in 2026 is like writing a guide for aviation in 1905” before airlines, airports or even commercial flight.

“If you were to take any of the AI literacy documents, AI readiness documents, even the moratorium documents, and put them against a checklist,” said Reich, “there would be a lot of boxes in the ‘we’re making this up’ column and not a lot in the ‘we have evidence’ column.”

State lawmakers and school districts should be honest that they don’t know what they’re doing, are relying on limited expert information and that policy is subject to change with new information, Reich said.

“Lawmakers will need to be honest that what they propose now could be completely outdated in two years.”

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

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

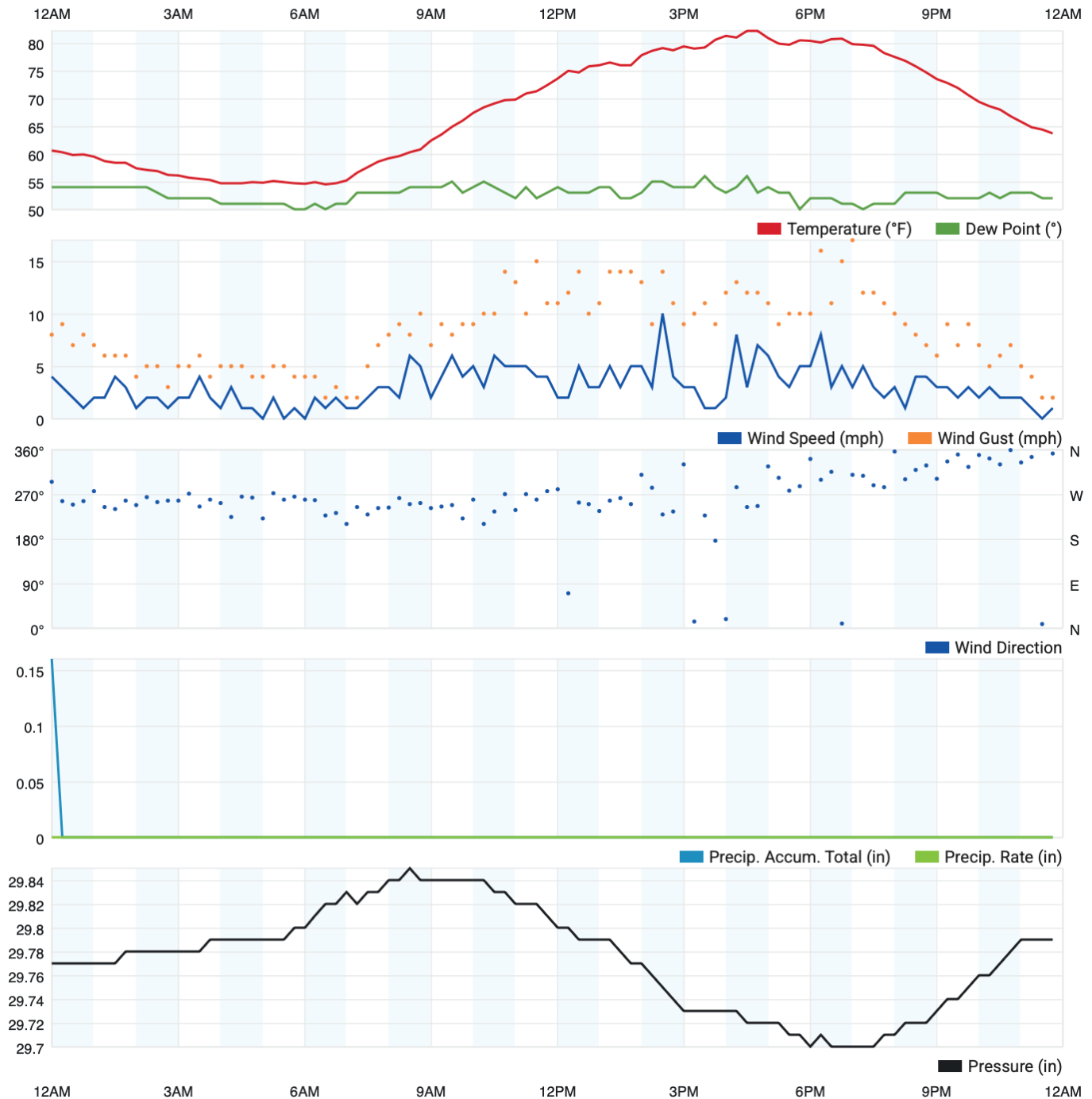
Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 12, 2026



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Today



High: 69 °F

Breezy.
Slight Chance
Showers then
Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 46 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Sunday



High: 73 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 46 °F

Partly Cloudy

Monday



High: 78 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

3 Day Outlook

Today



65 to 72°

Morning sprinkles north
central. Northwest winds 25 to
35 mph.

Sunday



69 to 75°

Northwest winds 20 to 30
mph.

Monday



74 to 80°

Warmer. 15 to 20% chance of
afternoon showers and
thunderstorms mainly north of
Hwy 12. Northwest winds 20 to
35 mph.



NWS Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/abr

June 13, 2026 3:24 AM

Breezy conditions are expected over the next few days with northwest winds gusting 20 to 35 mph. While no widespread precipitation is forecast, there will be off and on chances for isolated showers or thunderstorms, especially late Monday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 82 °F at 4:44 PM

Low Temp: 54 °F at 6:31 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 1:21 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1936

Record Low: 36 in 1942

Average High: 80

Average Low: 55

Average Precip in June.: 1.53

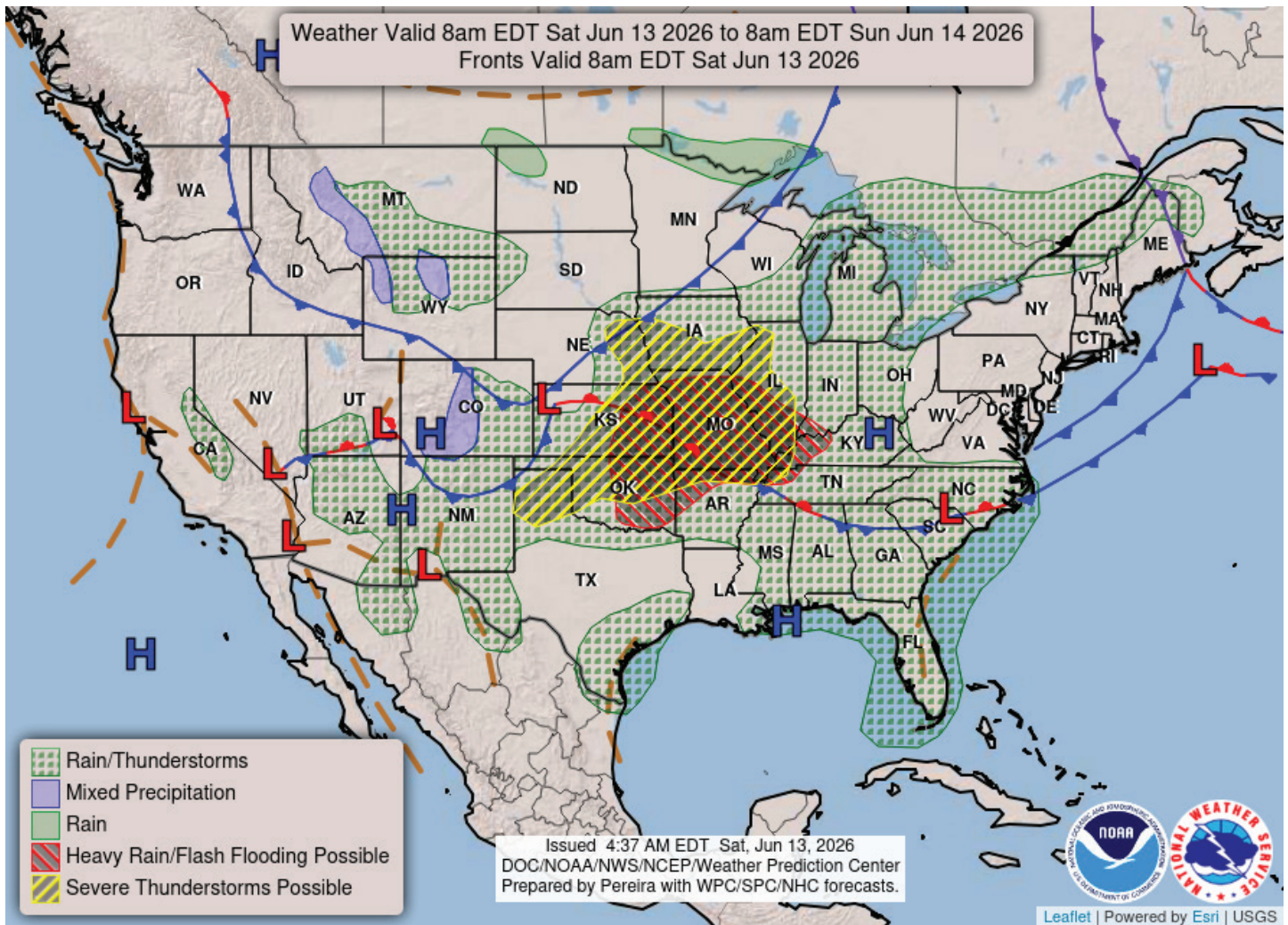
Precip to date in June.: 1.11

Average Precip to date: 8.78

Precip Year to Date: 7.47

Sunset Tonight: 9:21 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43 am



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Today in Weather History

June 13th, 1943: An estimated F2 tornado moved ENE, destroying a home on the southeastern edge of Highmore in Hyde County. A mother and her five children seeking shelter in the house were injured. Damage to barns and outbuildings occurred on a dozen farms. This tornado was estimated to be on the ground for about 8 miles and caused about \$10,000 in damage.

June 13th, 1991: A small F1 tornado remained on the ground for 4 miles as it moved westerly from 10 miles west of Roscoe to 6 miles west of Roscoe in Edmunds County. The tornado's path continued for another 5 miles but was not consistently on the ground. It dissipated one mile west of Roscoe. Although the tornado had a long path, its width was 10 yards. It traveled through open fields and caused little to no damage.

1889 — Forest fires in northern Wisconsin and northeast Minnesota were in the process of destroying millions of dollars of board feet of timber. (David Ludlum)

1907 — The temperature at Tamarack, CA, dipped to 2 degrees above zero, the lowest reading of record for June for the U.S. The high that day was 30 degrees. Tamarack received 42 inches of snow between the 10th and the 13th. On the 13th the snow depth was 130 inches. (The Weather Channel)

1984 — Severe thunderstorms struck Denver deluging the city with five inches of rain, and leaving up to six feet of water in some places. Softball size hail smashed windshields and ripped through metal cars. Snow plows had to be called out. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including International Falls, MN, with a reading of 92 degrees. Mason City IA and Waterloo IA reported record highs of 100 degrees. Thunderstorms in the northeastern U.S. produced golf ball size hail around Hamilton Square NJ, along with high winds which tore the roof off a hospital causing a million dollars damage. Averill Park NY was deluged with 1.64 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Southern and Central Plains Region. Forrest NM was deluged with 5.5 inches of rain in ninety minutes. Temperatures soared into the 90s across much of the eastern half of the nation, including New England. Northern Illinois reported a record twenty straight days of dry weather. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Southern Plains Region to the Carolinas during the day and night, and continued to drench parts of Texas and Oklahoma with heavy rain. Oklahoma City reported 13.41 inches of rain for the first thirteen days of the month, and Fort Worth TX reported 29.56 inches for the year, a total more than 13 inches above normal. Severe drought continued to rage across South Texas. (The National Weather Summary)

Getting Out of Step

Pride creates distance from God—and that distance causes us to miss His blessings.

1 Samuel 13:5-14: 5 Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits.

7 Also some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him.

9 So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.

10 As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him.

11 But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

12 therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."

13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

14 "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Saul had everything going for him. Besides being the son of a highly respected man, he was tall, handsome, and impressive in appearance (1 Samuel 9:1-2). Since God chose him to lead Israel at a time when the nation faced formidable enemies, we can surmise he was also courageous and charismatic. Even the prophet Samuel spoke admiringly of him: "There is no one like him among all the people" (1 Samuel 10:24).

But Saul spent much of his reign out of step with God. His errors in judgment stemmed largely from an inflated sense of self-importance. One blunder set off a chain reaction of sin, as we see in his desperate, jealous quest to kill David.

When people think more highly of themselves than they should (Romans 12:3), they stop relying on divine guidance. Saul thought he knew better than God; he ignored the law and offered a pre-battle sacrifice in Samuel's place—despite explicit instructions to wait for the prophet. Because Saul refused to submit to God's command, the Lord gave the kingdom to someone who would obey (1 Sam. 16:13-14).

Pride always drives us away from God's path. But the Lord gladly welcomes back the wayward. Blessing and joy await those who walk in step with Him.

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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Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.12.26

6 13 22 35 36 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 34 Mins 45
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.12.26

9 17 24 39 51 3

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$430,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

6 9 23 45 51 6

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$29,530,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 34 Mins 46
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

4 14 16 26 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$129,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 46
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

8 35 41 42 67 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 46
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

12 31 38 60 66 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$258,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 46
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Workers begin removing Trump's name from the Kennedy Center, hours after a court-ordered deadline

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Workers began removing President Donald Trump's name from the facade of the Kennedy Center early Saturday, hours after a court-ordered Friday deadline to remove references to Trump from the building and other aspects of the iconic performing arts venue's operations.

Scaffolding was erected Friday around a section of the building that includes Trump's name, but shortly after midnight, the Kennedy Center asked a judge to extend the deadline until noon Eastern Time on Saturday because of thunderstorms that had swept through the Washington area, causing a delay.

In the filing, the Kennedy Center offered assurance that the "removal work is presently ongoing" and would "conclude in the early hours of the morning."

A few hours later, workers began covering the scaffolding with tarps before they eventually started taking down Trump's name. They packed up and left the site around 3:30 a.m., though the tarps remained, leaving it impossible to determine if all the letters had been removed.

Dozens of people spent hours Friday on the plaza in front of the Kennedy Center taking pictures and cheering occasionally as they broke into chants of "take it down." Rep. Joyce Beatty, D-Ohio, an ex-officio board member who sued to have Trump's name removed from the building, was spotted at one point on the plaza.

Earlier Friday afternoon, a judge rejected a request to pause the court-ordered deadline. The institution appealed that ruling, an effort that was also rebuffed Friday evening.

After ignoring the Kennedy Center for much of his first term, Trump has wielded tremendous influence over the venue during his return to office. Just a month into his second term, he ousted the center's previous leadership and replaced it with a board of trustees that named him chairman. Trump's name was quickly added to the building.

In his ruling that only Congress could make changes to the Kennedy Center's name, U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper also blocked the administration from closing the cultural and arts venue for major renovations that had been planned to start in July and last for two years.

The Kennedy Center's leadership argued in its appeal Friday that the renovation was badly needed and accused the lower court, in terms that seemed similar to Trump's speech patterns, of interfering in the effort.

"The District Court is not allowing us to close in order to properly fix up and repair the Building, including potentially life threatening structural damage like beams and parking garage ceilings that are rusted, and in serious danger of falling onto people below," according to the appeal. "Indeed, total collapse!"

Even as the Kennedy Center has fought efforts to remove Trump's name from the building, it has taken steps to comply with Cooper's initial ruling.

A June 4 memo to staff from the Kennedy Center's Office of General Counsel said email signatures, letterhead and other documents must reflect the name as "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts" or "Kennedy Center."

The Kennedy Center's website has dropped Trump's name. And an earlier email sent to members offering ticket packages for the June 28 Mark Twain Award for American Humor ceremony came from the Kennedy Center without including Trump's name.

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AP Was There: 1975 summit at French castle plants seed for future G7 club of wealthy nations

By The Associated Press undefined

EDITOR'S NOTE: When U.S. President Gerald Ford and leaders of five other leading democracies gathered for talks at a castle outside Paris on Nov. 15, 1975, they planted the seed for what subsequently became the Group of Seven nations.

The initial six industrial powers that huddled at the Château de Rambouillet for three days of brainstorming about fixes for the global economy became the G7 the following year when Canada joined the elite club.

During and after the Cold War, the G7 became a powerful tool of influence, enabling Western allies and Japan to hammer out common positions not only on economic issues but also their foreign policy and security priorities.

The combined economic, industrial, military, and diplomatic strength of G7 nations ensures the summits they hold annually, rotating hosting duties, are always major news events.

The next G7 summit is in France next week.

As part of its coverage, The Associated Press is republishing extracts of the story that AP correspondent Arthur L. Gavshon wrote on the first day of the inaugural summit in 1975, hosted by French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and also including the leaders of West Germany, the U.K., Italy and Japan, as well as Ford.

By ARTHUR L. GAVSHON

RAMBOUILLET (AP) — President Ford called on leaders of five other major industrial nations Saturday to set themselves the task of transforming the world's economic slump into prosperity by 1977.

Addressing the opening session of an economic summit meeting amid the splendor of the 14th-century Chateau de Rambouillet, Ford "categorically rejected the view" that expansion in the industrial world is impossible at pre-recession rates, an aide told newsmen.

He added that Ford said America's economic recovery has been stronger than anticipated and forecast a growth rate of between 6 and 7 percent through 1976.

The first meeting with leaders of France, Britain, West Germany, Japan, and Italy began shortly after the President arrived at the historic chateau, 30 miles south of Paris.

The free-flowing talks broke nearly three hours later for dinner, and the host, French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, told newsmen: "I am optimistic. I think we can arrive at something concrete."

A French spokesman said the leaders were reaching "a remarkable convergence of views." British officials indicated a consensus was emerging that the worst of the economic downturn might already be over.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger struck the same positive note, saying the meeting "went very well."

The dinner was remarkably simple in comparison with the usual fare for a state occasion in France and was in line with the low-key approach favored by the French.

Stuffed chicken was the main course, with wines that were good but not spectacular.

In other developments at the six-nation talks:

— Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki who reported his country has been hurt by a decline in world trade, began pressing immediately for a freer flow of international commerce.

— British Prime Minister Harold Wilson disclosed through aides he wants his fellow leaders to back up a plan for a new and strengthened world code to check the spread of nuclear know-how, equipment, and weapons.

— Ford will join Giscard d'Estaing and Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro Sunday morning for services at the Roman Catholic church in Poigny la Forêt, a 10-minute drive from the chateau.

The setting was priceless furniture and statuary trucked from the Louvre for the occasion, but the mood at the start of the summit was that of a relayed businessmen's weekend seminar.

"It's just a beautiful place here," said Ford as President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France led the participants from six nations into the pink and gray hall of marble at the chateau where Louis XVI passed idle

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hours and Napoleon his last night in France before banishment to St. Helena.

"The facilities are really gorgeous," Ford said to Giscard d'Estaing. "It's very comfortable."

"I hope you feel as positive about all this afterwards," Giscard d'Estaing shot back with a laugh. Then he called out "Helmut, oh Helmut," as West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt entered the room.

The relayed mood also was apparent in the dress of the leaders. Giscard d'Estaing wore a greenish tweed weekend suit, and Schmidt had on a light gray one. Ford was the most formally dressed of the leaders in a dark blue suit with a vest and white shirt.

The group, 18 in all including the finance and foreign ministers of participating nations, was spread out nine on each side of a 30-foot long table. Giscard d'Estaing and Ford faced each other across the chestnut-colored upholstery covering the table, as did Harold Wilson of Britain and Aldo Moro of Italy, and Takeo Miki of Japan and Schmidt.

Each of the participants had earphones on which to follow proceedings. There were five closed-in interpreters' booths at one end of the smallish room, and a bust of King Francois I of France, who died at the chateau, at the other end.

The leaders do not expect to reach firm decisions at the three-day seminar but to define directions their individual governments can take in fighting inflation, unemployment and declining world trade.

Presidential press spokesman Ron Nessen said during Ford's flight across the Atlantic that the summit may result in an improved performance in the American economy.

"The President has always thought of it in practical terms – what it means to the American consumer," Nessen said.

Each of the visiting leaders was assigned an apartment in the chateau, home of French kings and rulers from the 14th century. Moving men had worked until the early hours Saturday uncrating furniture and paintings brought from the Louvre to spruce up the rooms.

More than 3,000 armed French police were deployed around the wooded grounds and gardens of the palace.

Ford was given the top room of the Francois I tower, which a French spokesman described as "the most comfortable apartment in the chateau." It has a Spanish-made bed with a working fireplace at the foot and a direct telephone linking Ford to the White House.

Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Britain was given an apartment done in mahogany and satin overlooking the garden ponds; Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki was down the hall in an apartment with heavy beams and Louis XVI furniture; Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany was in an apartment furnished in Directoire style, and Premier Aldo Moro of Italy had rooms furnished in Empire style.

With the idea of achieving general economic growth – and a cutback of the 15 million jobless in Western countries – the six nations intend to try to align their policies on such big issues as:

— The old French-American dispute over reform of the world monetary system. The French dislike the present floating exchange rates and want to return to a more rigid system while the United States and Britain would as soon leave the system flexible.

— The formulation of a common energy policy. Ford can count on majority backing for his view that the economic and political future of the industrial democracies cannot be left to the mercy of the oil producers. New sources of supply and new conservation programs should be jointly and quickly developed.

— The general world economic outlook and ways of tackling the inflation which is undermining political stability many places.

— Relationships between the older industrialized nations of the West, the newly rich producers of oil and other scarce raw materials, and the poorest developing lands.

AP exclusive: Doctors Without Borders report found cases of abuse and exploitation by staff in Chad

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

The international aid group Doctors Without Borders found a pattern of abuse and sexual exploitation by some local and foreign staff working in Chad along the Sudanese border, in some cases targeting underage girls or trading food or jobs for sex with refugees, according to a confidential internal memo obtained by The Associated Press.

The Doctors Without Borders report — completed in July and first reported Saturday by The Associated Press — found 59 allegations of abuse and said 18 staff members were dismissed and barred from future employment. In some cases, the group told AP, the allegations couldn't be verified or the perpetrators identified. The report also said some of the repeated exploitation suggested potentially organized "sexual trafficking."

The organization said it launched the monthslong investigation in response to AP reporting that women had accused staff of sexually exploiting them in displacement sites in Chad, where hundreds of thousands fled from Sudan's devastating civil war, now in its fourth year. The report credited AP as playing "a fundamental role as an external whistleblower."

The findings by Doctors Without Borders — one of the largest employers and biggest aid organizations in the refugee camps in eastern Chad — indicate the abuse was more widespread than previously reported.

Sexual exploitation has repeatedly surfaced during humanitarian crises despite years of efforts by aid organizations to prevent abuse.

In the cases AP found in Chad in 2024, women said people meant to protect them — humanitarians, local security forces — offered money, easier access to assistance and jobs in exchange for sex. Such sexual exploitation in Chad is a crime.

And in its report, Doctors Without Borders noted that the cases found in Chad stand out because it had allocated extra resources to combat and prevent abuse. The memo also said the findings likely only scratch the surface, as many women were hesitant to speak openly.

In response to questions about the memo, Doctors Without Borders — also known under its French acronym, MSF — called it "a candid internal analysis" that laid out where systems failed.

The 59 allegations of misconduct ranged from sexual harassment to exploitation and abuse and "represent a serious breach of MSF's values and responsibilities, and we deeply regret the harm caused," MSF said in its written response.

MSF operates in contexts where people are vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian assistance, which creates power imbalances and risks of abuse that must be addressed, MSF's statement noted. It said the investigations were meant to proactively confront the abuse.

In some of the cases investigated, tracing the people involved wasn't possible because of the scale of the emergency and movement of people, it said.

Since issuing the report, MSF has strengthened recruitment efforts, reference checks and complaint systems, it told AP.

Still, the group said in its statement that it recognized that significant work remains to ensure lasting change.

The report detailed several types of abuse and exploitation within Doctors Without Borders

MSF launched its investigation in fall 2024 and found allegations of exploitation and abuse of Chadians, Sudanese refugees, and MSF staff and contractors.

The report says the group was investigating several cases of sexual exploitation of female refugees in exchange for food, water and milk. It also found cases of sex in exchange for jobs, and the prostitution of female refugees, including underage girls. It cites a block in a refugee camp where staff were seen searching for girls, and said community leaders implemented a curfew to prevent young girls from "visiting" MSF staff.

In one incident cited in the report, seven refugee girls, allegedly hired as daily workers, were put into an

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MSF vehicle and told they were going to water distribution and construction sites. The girls, however, were taken to a different location and “exposed to” sexual abuse and requests for sex, according to the report.

In addition, some female Chadian staff were threatened with losing their jobs if they refused to have sex with supervisors or colleagues, the investigation found.

In focus groups conducted by investigators, women said they often chose to remain silent, worried it would jeopardize access to care. Some said they didn’t know they had the right to speak up or share feedback, according to the report.

MSF staff and community leaders told investigators they were afraid to report abuse for fear of losing jobs or assistance. The report noted that half a dozen community leaders said even though their daughters or sisters had been victims of abuse, they chose not to report to MSF.

The report also said that some who spoke up didn’t get help, with several alerts receiving no follow-up.

The memo said some feedback mechanisms, such as boxes where people could place complaints, were largely ineffective.

MSF employs tens of thousands of people across dozens of countries, with jobs ranging from doctors, nurses, midwives and epidemiologists to human resources, logistics, construction and sanitation specialists. The report did not specify which jobs those accused of abuse held. In its email to AP, MSF said it would not provide details such as employment category because of privacy and safety concerns.

MSF’s email emphasized that it has implemented improved reporting methods and integrated prevention and detection responses in its operation — for example, including confidential reporting channels in its current response to Congo’s Ebola outbreak.

Doctors Without Borders was unaware of most cases of abuse before AP’s reporting

Prior to AP’s reporting, MSF was unaware of most of the cases of abuse, according to the report.

In 2023, the report said, MSF had conducted weeks of training with staff and community leaders about prevention. But efforts didn’t have a lasting impact and were undermined by high staff turnover, it said.

The memo said the urgent need for personnel and the absence of reference checks had resulted in the hiring of people with a history of misconduct or abuse.

As a result of the investigation, the report said, 18 staff — including international, local and contractors — were or were about to be classified as “Do Not Hire.” But the report said there was no system in place to share names of people flagged as such, specifically for local staff, meaning they could get jobs in another MSF location.

The report made several recommendations: clearly communicating expected behavior to staff, employing “serious reference checks,” and creating one effective database for “Do Not Hire” staff.

Still, MSF acknowledged in the report that it had previously experienced similar allegations — the 2021 Ebola outbreak in Congo and reports of widespread exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peacekeepers in several West African countries in 2002 — but little had shifted overall.

“As a reminder, a rather similar diagnosis and recommendations were made in 2021,” said the memo. “Yet this led to no significant change.”

Trump’s name poised to be removed from Kennedy Center after court denies last-minute move to keep it

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Kennedy Center was running out of options Friday evening to keep President Donald Trump’s name on the facade of the iconic performing arts venue.

A judge earlier in the afternoon rejected a request to pause a court-ordered deadline of Friday to remove references to Trump from the building and other aspects of the Kennedy Center’s operations. The institution appealed that ruling, an effort that was also rebuffed Friday evening.

Scaffolding was erected around a section of the building that includes Trump’s name but the Kennedy Center sought a short extension to complete the work. Shortly after midnight, the Kennedy Center asked

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a judge to extend the deadline until noon Eastern Time on Saturday because of storms that had swept through the Washington area Friday, causing a delay. Some of the thunderstorms included lightning.

In the filing, the Kennedy Center offered assurance that the "removal work is presently ongoing" and would "conclude in the early hours of the morning."

Dozens of people spent hours on the plaza in front of the Kennedy Center taking pictures and cheering occasionally as they broke into chants of "take it down." Rep. Joyce Beatty, D-Ohio, an ex-officio board member who sued to have Trump's name removed from the building, was spotted at one point on the plaza as well.

After ignoring the Kennedy Center for much of his first term, Trump has wielded tremendous influence over the venue during his return to office. Just a month into his second term, he ousted the center's previous leadership and replaced it with a board of trustees that named him chairman. Trump's name was quickly added to the building.

In his ruling that only Congress could make changes to the Kennedy Center's name, U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper also blocked the administration from closing the cultural and arts venue for major renovations that had been planned to start in July and last for two years.

The Kennedy Center's leadership argued in its appeal Friday that the renovation was badly needed and accused the lower court, in terms that seemed similar to Trump's speech patterns, of interfering in the effort.

"The District Court is not allowing us to close in order to properly fix up and repair the Building, including potentially life threatening structural damage like beams and parking garage ceilings that are rusted, and in serious danger of falling onto people below," according to the appeal. "Indeed, total collapse!"

Even as the Kennedy Center has fought efforts to remove Trump's name from the building, it has taken steps to comply with Cooper's initial ruling.

A June 4 memo to staff from the Kennedy Center's Office of General Counsel said email signatures, letterhead and other documents must reflect the name as "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts" or "Kennedy Center."

The Kennedy Center's website has dropped Trump's name. And an earlier email sent to members offering ticket packages for the June 28 Mark Twain Award for American Humor ceremony came from the Kennedy Center without including Trump's name.

How Americans celebrated the bicentennial — with fireworks, a Freedom Train and Farrah

By LOU KESTEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In 1976's "Rocky," heavyweight champion Apollo Creed arrives for the title fight dressed as George Washington, reenacting the crossing of the Delaware as models costumed as the Statue of Liberty lead the way.

After entering the ring, Apollo switches into an Uncle Sam costume. "I want YOU!" he roars as he points to Rocky Balboa, the far less flamboyant palooka he's chosen for this bicentennial bout in Philadelphia.

Then the two boxers pound the daylights out of each other.

It's as accurate a representation of the American bicentennial vibe as has ever been put on film — plenty of fireworks, but not much thought about how 200 years of independence led to this.

I was 13 years old in 1976. Kids my age — the tail end of the Baby Boom, or the vanguard of Generation X — grew up skeptical of the government. We had outlasted the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, with the occasional moment of joy — the moon landing, say — to break the gloom. The state of the union was intact, even if many Americans were still on edge.

My family lived in Newport News, Virginia, not far from the Historic Triangle of Jamestown, Yorktown and Williamsburg. So there was plenty of buzz surrounding the bicentennial. President Gerald Ford and his wife, Betty, took a carriage ride through Colonial Williamsburg, foreign leaders came to visit, and the living museum regularly staged reenactments of the events leading up to the signing of the Declaration

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of Independence.

Ford and plenty of other dignitaries went to New York for what the president called "the greatest Fourth of July any of us will ever see." Operation Sail was a floating parade of 16 tall ships and more than 100 smaller vessels from around the world — including, even, the Soviet Union. It was a boon for the beleaguered Big Apple, proving that "New Yorkers could get along, even during difficult times," according to the Gotham Center for New York History.

All aboard the Freedom Train

For history buffs who couldn't make the trip east, there was the American Freedom Train, a 26-car behemoth that toured all 48 contiguous states. It displayed two centuries of artifacts like George Washington's copy of the Constitution, the original Louisiana Purchase, Judy Garland's dress from "The Wizard of Oz" and a moon rock. Merle Haggard even released a song about it.

I had a nifty 3D poster of the Freedom Train on my bedroom wall. A different poster captured everyone's eye later in 1976 — one featuring "Charlie's Angels" star Farrah Fawcett-Majors.

It's patriotic in its own way. There's Farrah, sporting big hair, a blinding white smile and a red swimsuit, posed in front of a red, white and blue blanket. The color scheme may not have been intentional, but it might as well be titled "All-American Girl" for its presentation of what much of society saw as one.

There were plenty of more deliberate anniversary collectibles out there. A quick search of eBay in 2026 digs up hundreds of collectible plates, glasses, beer mugs and bumper stickers. The government unleashed special quarters, stamps and license plates. And of course Madison Avenue jumped in, selling bicentennial cereal, candy, beer and soda. You could get a different 7-Up can for each of the 50 states.

Even the creator of the Pet Rock — the preposterous 1975 phenomenon that was, yes, a rock in a box — tried to get in on the act. That fad, alas, had run its course, and the Bicentennial Pet Rock flopped. You'd have been better off buying a Pez dispenser with the head of Paul Revere or Betsy Ross.

Broadcast television — remember, we only had three networks — was more subdued. For kids, ABC's beloved "Schoolhouse Rock!" spun off "America Rock." But while that cartoon did include some history, it's best remembered for the mournful civics lesson "I'm Just a Bill."

More prominent was CBS News' "Bicentennial Minute." Starting July 4, 1974, barely a month before President Richard Nixon resigned, it ran every night in prime time, presenting the news from 200 years earlier. It was so unavoidable that sitcoms like "All in the Family" referred to it; "Saturday Night Live," which debuted in 1975, paid tribute with a "Bisexual Minute."

Still, all three networks pulled out the stops on July 4, 1976. Walter Cronkite led the pack with 16 hours of coverage on CBS, while "Bob Hope's Bicentennial Star-Spangled Spectacular" ("the show that took 200 years to produce") on NBC celebrated with Sammy Davis Jr., Captain & Tennille and Donny and Marie Osmond.

The bad news bearers

Certainly, not everyone was in the mood to celebrate. Richard Pryor released an influential album whose title was "Bicentennial," followed by an ethnic slur. The title track is a monologue from a 200-year-old slave; it ends with "I ain't gonna never forget it." In the same album's "Bicentennial Prayer," Pryor proclaims, "We are celebrating 200 years of white folks kickin' ass."

Popular music wasn't in a particularly patriotic mood either. Elton John's 1975 hit "Philadelphia Freedom" became a de facto anthem of sorts, even though it's barely about Philadelphia and is more about individual independence.

Indeed, the prevailing pop attitude was: Let's forget about this mess we've left behind and go to the disco. So the Billboard singles charts were topped by the likes of Johnnie Taylor's "Disco Lady," The Sylvers' "Boogie Fever," The Bee Gees' "You Should Be Dancing" and KC and the Sunshine Band's "(Shake Shake Shake) Shake Your Booty."

On the album charts, California's hippie culture was shaking off its hangover with haunted LPs like the Eagles' "Hotel California" and Jackson Browne's "The Pretender." Something else was breaking loose in New York, though, with aggressive debuts from the Ramones and Blondie. The Ramones' logo included an

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eagle holding an olive branch and a baseball bat, and their repertoire included the future stadium anthem "Blitzkrieg Bop." What could be more American?

Speaking of America's pastime, I'd be remiss if I didn't bring up the year's funniest movie, "The Bad News Bears." It's baseball the way it was meant to be played — by a bunch of foul-mouthed juvenile delinquents coached by a surly, alcoholic has-been embodied by Walter Matthau. Double 50-year-old spoiler alert: Like Rocky, the Bears don't win in the end. But they do have fun.

The same can't be said for the characters in most of 1976's dramatic films. Hollywood did its best to get a patriotic movie — the World War II epic "Midway" — in theaters in June, but it quickly fizzled. The top box office draw on July 4th was "The Omen," about an angelic-looking boy who turns out to be the Antichrist.

More prestigious films continued to wrestle with the paranoia of the Nixon era. "All the President's Men" dramatized The Washington Post's investigation of the Watergate scandal. In "Taxi Driver," a Vietnam War veteran plots to assassinate a presidential contender. In "Network," a TV anchorman urges his viewers to open their windows and scream, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

All three are undisputed classics. All three were nominated for the Best Picture Oscar. All three lost to "Rocky."

Trump says US military strike killed leader of Tren de Aragua gang with help from Venezuela

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that a "swift and lethal kinetic" U.S. strike has killed Héctor Rusthenford Guerrero Flores, whom he called "the infamous leader" of the Tren de Aragua gang.

Tren de Aragua has been labeled by the United States as a terrorist organization. Guerrero Flores was charged in a New York federal court with racketeering conspiracy and other crimes, including lending support to terrorists in crimes that stretched more than a decade, authorities announced in December.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth posted on X that the strike occurred earlier in the week on a Tren de Aragua compound in Venezuela.

U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton said at the time that the gang is responsible for countless acts of violence, extortion and drug trafficking in North America, South America and Europe. Trump nominated Clayton on Thursday to be director of national intelligence.

The U.S. State Department had offered rewards of up to \$5 million for information leading to Guerrero Flores' arrest.

In a post on his social media site, Trump wrote, "Tren de Aragua terrorists no longer have safe haven in Venezuela or anywhere else and, under my leadership, we will find these vicious murderers and drug lords anytime, anyplace, and send them to the depths of hell where they belong." Trump's post referred to Guerrero Flores by his alias, "Niño Guerrero."

The post also included unclassified video, shot from above, of a small building with a green roof exploding.

Hegseth said, "The operation underscores the shared U.S. and Venezuelan commitment to take the fight to narco-terrorists and deny them any safe haven in our hemisphere."

Venezuela's government released a statement confirmed its participation in the operation and revealed it took place in the southeastern state of Bolivar.

"During the operation, clashes occurred with members of criminal groups, resulting in the death of Héctor Rusthenford Guerrero Flores, alias 'Niño Guerrero,' the leader of one of these criminal organizations," according to the statement.

The mineral-rich state, which borders Brazil and Guyana, is home to large illegal mining operations long controlled by gangs and other actors who mine with the consent — and to the benefit — of officials and the military.

Trump has taken a series of extraordinary actions against the gang, including a series of strikes on small boats his administration has accused of smuggling drugs to America. At least 207 people have been

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killed in boat strikes by the U.S. military in the eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea since the Trump administration began targeting those it calls "narcoterrorists" in early September.

Trump and administration officials have consistently blamed Tren de Aragua for being at the root of the violence and illicit drug dealing that plague some U.S. cities. The president spent months repeating the claim — contradicted by a declassified U.S. intelligence assessment — that Tren de Aragua had operated under Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's control. The U.S. whisked Maduro out of Venezuela to face U.S. drug charges in January.

Tren de Aragua originated more than a decade ago at an infamously lawless prison with hardened criminals in Venezuela's central state of Aragua. The gang has expanded in recent years as millions of Venezuelans migrated to other Latin American countries or the U.S. in search of better living conditions.

Guerrero Flores returned to the prison in Aragua for murder and other convictions in 2013, when Venezuela's crisis began as corruption, mismanagement and a drop in crude prices wrecked the oil-dependent economy. Guerrero Flores and a few other inmates saw a profitable opportunity as the government neglected prisons.

They assumed control and administration of the prison, establishing a system that controlled the entire inmate population through force and extortion. Over time, they transformed the facility into a sort of city that included a zoo, baseball field, casino and restaurants. Guerrero Flores had his own lavish suite.

The size of the gang is unclear. Countries with large populations of Venezuelan migrants, including Peru and Colombia, have accused the group of being behind a spree of violence in the region. Still, unlike other criminal organizations from Colombia, Central America and Brazil, Tren de Aragua has no large-scale involvement in smuggling cocaine across international borders, according to InSight Crime, a think tank that tracks crime across Latin America.

In Venezuela, gang leaders have long been known to participate in various illegal activities, including gold mining and drug trafficking.

The legal mining of gold and other minerals is a component of the Trump administration's phased plan to turn the crisis-wrecked country around. In March, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum told reporters during a visit to Venezuela that the government of acting President Delcy Rodríguez was giving security assurances to mining companies interested in investing in the South American country.

Trump campaigned for a second term promising to crack down on immigration and crime. While polls show his favorability ratings have sagged on his handling of the economy, immigration remains Trump's strongest issue, according to the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

World Cup what to know: U.S. gets electric win over Paraguay, Brazil-Morocco awaits on Saturday

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

The United States and Mexico had a dream start to a World Cup on their home soil.

Canada's first game wasn't too bad, either.

The Americans put an exclamation point on Friday's action with a 4-1 win over Paraguay in Inglewood, California, building a 3-0 lead by halftime and matching the biggest U.S. World Cup victory.

Folarin Balogun scored two goals and Giovanni Reyna added another in the final minute as the American team broke its record for goals in a World Cup game. Christian Pulisic was the offensive catalyst in the first half before sitting out the second half for precautionary reasons after getting kicked in the left calf.

Earlier Friday, Canada rallied for a 1-1 draw against Bosnia-Herzegovina in Toronto.

Cyle Larin — who had just entered the game — scored in the 78th minute to tie after the Canadians fought from behind for the majority of the afternoon. Bosnia's Jovo Lukic scored in the 21st minute with a nifty header off a corner kick, briefly quieting the home crowd.

The World Cup gets into the meat of its schedule starting Saturday — highlighted by an intriguing matchup between Brazil and Morocco. There are at least four games scheduled each day until June 27.

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Mexico opened the tournament on Thursday with a dominant 2-0 win over South Africa in front of a boisterous crowd at Mexico City's Azteca Stadium.

What to watch on June 13

Fox is the exclusive U.S. broadcaster of the World Cup with all 104 matches in English on Fox or FS1. All matches are also available on the Fox One app. Telemundo and Universo will broadcast all of the matches in Spanish. Peacock is the streaming home for Spanish-language broadcasts while Telemundo also has an app that includes all the matches.

- Qatar vs. Switzerland, 3 p.m. EDT in Santa Clara, California (FOX/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Brazil vs. Morocco, 6 p.m. EDT in East Rutherford, New Jersey (FOX/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Haiti vs. Scotland, 9 p.m. EDT in Foxborough, Massachusetts (FOX/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Australia vs. Turkey, midnight EDT in Vancouver, British Columbia (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)

Qatar back in World Cup, Switzerland eyes a deep run

Qatar was an automatic qualifier for the 2022 World Cup because it was the host country, but earned its way into the field this time. Almoez Ali is the country's career scoring leader with 60 goals in 126 international appearances.

Switzerland qualified for its sixth straight World Cup and enters the tournament as the 19th-ranked team. The Swiss have never won a knockout-round game despite advancing out of their group three times. Switzerland is led by midfielder Granit Xhaka, who has 145 caps.

Brazil vs. Morocco is a group-stage showdown between top 10 teams

Brazil has one of the most historically successful teams, winning World Cups in 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994 and 2002. But the Brazilians haven't been quite as good over the last few decades, losing in the quarter-finals in four of the last five tournaments. They're still a formidable squad — ranked No. 6 coming into Saturday's match.

Morocco — the No. 7 team — is one of Africa's best squads and made World Cup history in 2022, reaching the semifinals before losing to France.

Underdogs Haiti and Scotland enjoy return to World Cup after long absences

Two long World Cup droughts will end as Haiti takes on Scotland in both nation's Group C opening match. Haiti is making its first appearance in the tournament since 1974. Scotland is back for the first time since 1998.

Haiti has never earned a World Cup point. Scotland will have a big boost as it attempts to earn its first point since a draw against Norway in 1998.

Scotland midfielder Scott McTominay, whose overhead kick in a win over Denmark in November sealed the Tartan Army's World Cup qualification, is expected to be available after dealing with an illness.

Following disappointing showings by his team at the 2020 and 2024 European Championship, coach Steve Clarke said this group isn't satisfied with just making it to another major tournament.

"Obviously, we know the last two tournaments haven't gone the way that we wanted," Clarke said Friday. "We have another chance. And that's credit to the players that keep qualifying for these major tournaments. It's great to be here, but we also want to do something special."

Turkey returns to World Cup for first time since 2002, faces Australia

Australia is making its sixth straight World Cup appearance and seventh overall. The Australians — ranked No. 27 — reached the round of 16 during the 2022 tournament before losing to eventual champion Argentina.

Turkey is back in the World Cup for the first time since 2002, when it finished third. It's been a country on the rise over the past few years and is up to No. 22 in the rankings.

Head of Palestinian soccer says he wasn't granted US visa for World Cup

The head of the Palestinian Football Association is waiting in Mexico City for permission to enter the United States with other federation heads attending the World Cup.

Jibril Rajoub went to the opening match between Mexico and South Africa on Thursday. But he is among several people accredited to attend the World Cup who have been denied visas or have yet to receive them from the United States.

The Palestinian team did not qualify for the World Cup, but FIFA typically invites the heads of football

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associations from around the world to the event every four years, which it frames as a celebration of global unity.

More World Cup news

- A Bosnian song about disillusionment with the American Dream becomes a World Cup banger
- Soccer fans around the world watch the World Cup, in photos
- Visa denial sidelines Thomas Partey for Ghana's World Cup opener against Panama in Toronto
- Mexico coach Javier Aguirre's youth gamble sparks a victory in the World Cup's opening match
- Roaring crowds in stars and stripes show up for the US team, and soccer's moment in their country

Stats of the day

- Canada had lost all of its six World Cup games before its draw with Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Host countries improved their record in World Cup openers to 18 wins, one loss and seven draws.

The only host to lose an opener was Qatar, 2-0 to Ecuador in 2022.

- The Americans' four goals were their most in a World Cup game.

Shooter kills 1 and injures 10 in Texas days after firing at a police officer, officials say

By JEFFREY COLLINS and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

A man who opened fire in the West Texas city of Midland in an attack Friday morning that left one person dead and 10 injured had shot at a police officer just days earlier during a chase, authorities said.

The suspect, 45-year-old Victor Mata Villarreal, already was being sought by authorities when he began firing at police and bystanders in Midland on Friday before barricading himself in an abandoned veterinary clinic, where he was eventually found dead, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Police have provided limited details about how the shooting unfolded. Police arrived in the area after receiving reports of an active shooter, and Mata Villarreal started firing at officers, said Midland Police Chief Greg Snow. Several officers were pinned down behind their patrol cars and had to be rescued by an armored vehicle, Snow said, but no officers were shot.

Police then got everyone out of the area. "We moved to deny more targets for this active shooter," Snow said.

A few hours after the shooting began, authorities used robot and drone footage from inside the building to confirm the shooter was dead, Midland Mayor Lori Blong. Police did not say how he died.

A spokesperson for the city identified a man killed in the shooting as Ed Scott, a father and husband who worked in solid waste for Midland. He also did a lot of work with local and regional softball organizations, according to the city.

Friends mourning his death described him in social media posts as a softball umpire and volleyball official who was known for his kindness and jokes.

Mata Villarreal, of nearby Odessa, was wanted for attempted capital murder of a peace officer after firing multiple times at a Midland police officer on Wednesday, the state's public safety agency said.

The officer, who wasn't injured, fired back after initially trying to pull over Mata Villarreal, who drove away, investigators said. His vehicle was found empty a short distance away, they said. Police have not said why the officer tried to stop Mata Villarreal.

Friday's standoff happened about a half-mile (1 kilometer) from where the shots were fired at the police officer Wednesday.

Police have not said why Mata Villarreal began shooting on Friday or provided any details about the victims, including who they were, how they were shot or the conditions of those still hospitalized.

Midland Memorial Hospital said four people who were brought there underwent surgery and that five had been treated and released.

Calls to numbers listed for some relatives of Mata Villarreal in Texas went unanswered Friday or appeared to be lines that had been disconnected.

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Mata Villarreal had several previous encounters with law enforcement, including some arrests, records show.

He was convicted on a 2009 charge of unlawfully carrying a firearm in San Angelo, according to Texas criminal history records.

He was charged in 2003 and 2004 for unlawfully carrying a weapon and unlawful possession of a prohibited weapon, but both cases appear to have been dismissed as part of a plea. He also pleaded no contest to a domestic violence charge in 2008 that was later dismissed.

As police responded to Friday's shooting, dozens of squad cars and law enforcement vehicles descended along what's normally a busy roadway lined with hotels and auto businesses a few miles west of Midland's downtown.

Andrea Mendias said she heard what sounded like a small explosion at the closed veterinary clinic next to the auto body shop where she works and saw a number of heavily armed police officers rush into the parking lot. Some appeared to go inside the building.

Mendias said she earlier heard what sounded like at least 40 gunshots.

Video from Mendias showed officers pouring out of the back of an armored police vehicle and police deploying robots into the area.

The city with about 140,000 residents sits in the heart of the state's oil and gas region and was near the site of a deadly shooting rampage in 2019.

In that shooting, a gunman who had been fired from his oil services job killed seven people and wounded two dozen others while firing at random as he drove around the Odessa and Midland areas. The two cities are more than 300 miles (482 kilometers) west of Dallas.

Gene Shalit, longtime 'Today' show movie critic with bushy hair and massive mustache, dies at 100

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Gene Shalit, a movie critic and arts reporter for the "Today" show over four decades who was known for his puffy hair, oversized handlebar mustache and affection for groan-inducing puns, has died. He was 100.

Shalit's family announced the death Friday to NBC News, saying in a statement that he "passed away peacefully today after 100 years of an amazing life."

Shalit joined "Today" as a contributor in 1970 and became arts editor in 1973, later settling in for his segment, "Critic's Corner." When he left the show in 2010, he was one of the last high-profile film critics on a major network.

"What resonated above his unusual appearance was his incredible wit, his remarkable intelligence. But he didn't pound you over the head with it. He amused you. He enlightened and amused whatever subject he was on," Guy Ludwig, Shalit's producer for more than 20 years, wrote in an essay at the time of Shalit's retirement.

It was no coincidence that Chicago critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel's local "thumbs-up, thumbs-down" movie-review program, "Sneak Previews," went national on PBS in the late 1970s and that "Today" show's ABC rival, "Good Morning America," hired Joel Siegel to be its movie critic in 1981.

"Shalit was instrumental in changing the balance of critical power in America. When he began his 'Today' tenure, newspapers and magazines were the primary sources for movie reviews. That's where cinematic opinion was sparked and shaped," The Plain Dealer wrote in 2010, calling Shalit "Daniel Boone in a bow tie and Groucho glasses."

Magazine work led to NBC offer

Shalit started as an entertainment columnist for McCall's magazine, eventually becoming senior film critic for Look magazine in 1968 and writing for Ladies' Home Journal. His popularity in magazines led to an offer from NBC.

"No one at NBC had seen him. They'd only read his stuff. So he walked into this executive's office and

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the executive took one look at him and said, 'Mr. Shalit, have you ever thought of radio?'" wrote Ludwig. "They didn't know how the public would react to someone who looked so different from people who were typically on TV in 1967."

On the air, Shalit was a middle-of-the-road critic. Of 1986's classic "Stand By Me," he said it was different from other movies about youth "because of instead of grossing you out, 'Stand by You' is engrossing."

"Many critics will give so much of the plot of a movie away that they destroy the movie for the viewer. ... I just don't give away the story," he told The Associated Press in 1993.

Highlights in words

He liked "Enemy at the Gates," starring Jude Law, calling it "a vivid dramatization of one of history's titanic turning points." But he called "Brokeback Mountain" "wildly overpraised, but not by me" and drew condemnation from GLAAD for calling Jake Gyllenhaal's character, Jack, a "sexual predator." Shalit apologized.

He called "Frozen" "very cool." He said the oddball title of "The Men Who Stare at Goats" was "heard to bleat," and his review of "The Lovely Bones" read in part: "There's no bones about it."

He began reviewing on air the year of "Patton" and "Love Story" and ended his run with a critique of "Shrek Forever After," of which he noted that the "bellow fellow is now a mellow fellow." One highlight of this tenure was his descent into a fit of giggles while interviewing Carol Channing.

He called a remake of "King Kong" so "gargantuan that I must create new words to describe it: fabularious ... a brilliantological humongousness of marvelosity." His take on Steven Spielberg's adaptation of Alice Walker's "The Color Purple": "It should be against the law not to see it."

In a 1981 interview with John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd, Belushi said Shalit's hair looked like "an ant farm on fire." Nevertheless, he peppered his guest with so many questions about their daily life that it felt like therapy. He asked both comedians what their last meals would be. "What do you want to be doing 10 years from now, John Belushi?" Shalit asked. "Fiddler on the Roof" Belushi replied.

During his tenure, he traded quips with anchors ranging from Edwin Newman, Barbara Walters and Jane Pauley to Tom Brokaw, Bryant Gumbel, Katie Couric, Al Roker and Meredith Vieira.

Gumbel was not always a fan, once saying Shalit's reviews "are often late and his interviews aren't very good." The critique came in what was supposed to be a confidential memo to Marty Ryan, the show's executive producer at the time.

In 1994, while in St. Pete Beach, Florida, to cover Major League Baseball spring training, a car hit Shalit as he was crossing a street and broke his leg. After that, "Today" began recording his movie reviews in his home studio.

Early life

He was born in New York and grew up in Morristown, New Jersey, starting his grammar school's first newspaper before writing a humor column for the newspaper while a student at Morristown High School. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1949.

Shalit played the bassoon, but he said he started out on the clarinet.

"I didn't practice for a few weeks and the teacher got furious," he recalled in 1988, before playing bassoon in a New York City fundraiser. "He took away my clarinet and as punishment he said, 'From now on, you're gonna play THIS.'"

In 1987, he edited a book called "Laughing Matters: A Celebration of American Humor," saying he wanted to introduce and reintroduce such old and new masters of American humor as Mark Twain, James Thurber and Russell Baker.

Shalit was regularly mocked on "Saturday Night Live" by cast member Horatio Sanz, who would appear on the "Weekend Update" desk dressed as Shalit and go on extended, barely coherent rants that punned the title of every movie he reviewed. Shalit also made cameos on "Sesame Street," "Family Guy" and "SpongeBob SquarePants."

Shalit was predeceased in 1978 by his wife, Nancy Lewis, and had six children.

Anthropic says it has taken its latest AI models offline to comply with new export controls

WASHINGTON (AP) — AI giant Anthropic said Friday it has taken its latest artificial intelligence models, known as Fable 5 and Mythos 5, offline to comply with a directive from the Trump administration to prevent their use by foreign nationals.

The export controls mark the U.S. government's most significant step to date to restrict access to the most advanced AI models. Anthropic released Fable widely this week. That model is a limited version of the even more advanced Mythos, to which the company has tightly limited access due to cybersecurity fears.

In a statement, Anthropic said it disagrees with the government's handling of the matter, saying it received the directive from the U.S. government Friday afternoon and it did not specify the national security concerns. "We believe the government should have the ability to block unsafe deployments, as part of a statutory process that is transparent, fair, clear, and grounded in technical facts," the company said. "This action does not adhere to those principles."

Anthropic called it a "misunderstanding" and said it hopes to restore access to the models "as soon as possible."

The Commerce Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The action comes 10 days after President Donald Trump signed an executive order to establish a framework for the federal government to vet the national security risks of the most advanced AI systems for up to a month before their public release. Participation by AI developers would be voluntary, the order said.

US and Iran have agreed to wording of a deal to end their war, Pakistan's prime minister says

By MUNIR AHMED, MICHELLE L. PRICE and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's prime minister said Friday the United States and Iran have agreed to wording of an agreement aimed at ending their war in the Middle East and that mediators were working with both sides to finalize a deal.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the U.S. and Iran have reached a "final, agreed upon text." He said Pakistan, which has taken the lead in mediation efforts, was working with the warring countries on next steps.

"Peace has never been this close as it is now," Sharif said in a post on X.

The apparent breakthrough in negotiations comes after Iran exchanged fire with the U.S. and Israel over three days this week, threatening to return the Middle East to full-scale war.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Friday an agreement "has never been closer" in a post on X. U.S. President Donald Trump, who has said multiple times in recent weeks the countries are on the cusp of a deal, shared Araghchi's post on his own social media.

The war launched by the U.S. and Israel on Feb. 28 has rattled the Middle East and virtually shut down oil and natural gas shipments from the Persian Gulf. A fragile ceasefire has been in place since April 7.

Iranian official says nuclear details will follow an agreement to end the war

Araghchi told Iranian state TV on Friday that both sides were working toward signing an initial agreement declaring an end to the war "on all fronts, including Lebanon."

Israel has been fighting the Iranian-allied militia Hezbollah in Lebanon since early March. Israel is not a party to the negotiations between the U.S. and Iran, and its leaders have said they don't plan to withdraw from Lebanon.

Araghchi said terms dealing with Iran's nuclear program would be finalized in the 60 days after the initial agreement is signed. He said the parties could agree to extend that period.

Iran's nuclear program has been a key point of division. The U.S. and Israel fear it could lead to an atomic weapon — a main reason their leaders cited for going to war. Tehran has insisted its nuclear ef-

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forts are for peaceful purposes.

A senior U.S. administration official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said Friday that the emerging agreement would begin the process of destroying or removing Tehran's highly enriched uranium.

The official said the 60-day period after both sides sign the deal would be used to work out technical details for removing Iran's enriched uranium. The official did not detail who the U.S. envisions taking charge of removing the uranium, which is believed to be entombed under three nuclear sites that were battered by U.S. strikes last year.

Also critical is Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for oil and natural gas. Disruption of transit through the strait has crimped global energy supplies, driven up fuel prices and made food and other basics more expensive well beyond the region.

The U.S. official said the emerging agreement includes provisions for reopening the strait.

Araghchi said Iran wants a deal that allows Tehran to charge ships "for services rendered" when they transit the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has imposed a toll system during the war, which the U.S. and other nations say violates international law.

"There will be costs involved," Araghchi said, "and those costs must be paid."

U.S. Central Command late Friday said in a social media post that it intercepted several Iranian attack drones that were targeting commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

Officials say a deal could be signed in the coming days

Three regional officials said the emerging deal is also expected to include the phased lifting of sanctions on Iran and the release of frozen Iranian assets. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.

They said they expect a signing ceremony for the agreement in the coming days after officials in Washington and Tehran approve it.

Trump on Thursday claimed significant progress in the negotiations, just hours after he threatened to escalate attacks and seize Iran's oil industry.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel is not a party to the deal being negotiated. He said in a statement Friday that he and Trump were in "full agreement" that Iran must not have nuclear weapons.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a separate statement that Israel also expects Trump to uphold key Israeli interests, including weakening Iran's missile program and proxy network.

Katz warned that Israel could still act independently toward Iran and that the country would not pull out of the zones it is occupying in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza, nor would it withdraw from the northern refugee camps of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The deal was largely being brokered by Pakistan, led by its army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, the regional officials said, with backing from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Qatar.

Paramount Skydance merger with Warner Bros. Discovery won't harm competition, consumers, DOJ says

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

An investigation by the U.S. Justice Department into Paramount Skydance's proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery has determined that the mammoth Hollywood media merger is not likely to harm competition in the industry or be harmful for consumers.

The agency said Friday that it closed its probe into the deal, with regulators at its antitrust division concluding that the impact of the merger "will be to increase competition across the media and entertainment ecosystem, with benefits for American consumers and workers."

David Ellison's Paramount Skydance reached a deal to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery in late February. Paramount's victory came after months of negotiations and a rival bid by Netflix that ultimately fell short. Paramount was bought by Skydance last year.

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The companies contend that merging will be good for growth in the industry and give consumers access to more content, particularly if the HBO Max and Paramount+ libraries are combined. But critics have decried what further consolidation could mean in an industry already controlled by just a few major players.

Among the potential market impacts from the merger, regulators weighed whether the deal would hurt competition in video streaming. They concluded that the merger would likely increase competition by giving customers a more "robust competitive alternative" to larger video streaming alternatives.

The agency also determined that YouTube, TikTok and other social media portals that also offer video streaming content "do not appear to be competitive substitutes here under well-established antitrust legal precedents, although they compete broadly for consumer attention."

Regulators also concluded that the merger is not likely to harm competition for so-called linear television, citing a strong competition for live programming.

On the question of competition in Hollywood, regulators found that the combination of two major film studio operators is not likely to harm competition in studio development, production or distribution of films for theatrical release.

"Instead, evidence shows extensive competition within the industry, which has generated greater output and diversity of film offerings, and is likely to continue unabated," regulators concluded.

Thousands of actors, directors, writers and other industry professionals have voiced "unequivocal opposition" to the Paramount deal, arguing that further consolidation will lead to job losses and fewer choices for filmmakers and moviegoers. Many lawmakers have similarly sounded the alarm.

Ellison, chief executive of Paramount Skydance, has pledged to keep Paramount and Warner Bros. as standalone movie studio operations, and vowed to release a combined 30 movies a year in theaters. Paramount has acknowledged the merger will also lead to significant cuts due to duplication.

While the Trump administration's Justice Department has now confirmed it won't be challenging Paramount's \$81 billion purchase of Warner, the mega merger is still being reviewed by other regulators both in the U.S. and abroad.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta has been particularly vocal about the transaction, and he said his state is investigating it.

Beyond the U.S., European regulators are also looking into the deal. The European Commission has listed July 7 as a tentative deadline for its review. And the U.K.'s Competition and Markets Authority is aiming to make an initial decision about its probe by early August.

Paramount and Warner previously said that they hoped to close their deal sometime in the third quarter of this year. And that clock is ticking. Paramount pledged to give shareholders some compensation if the acquisition doesn't close by Sept. 30 — in the form of a 25-cent per share "ticking fee" for every quarter past that date. It has also agreed to a regulatory termination fee of \$7 billion.

SpaceX stock soars in debut and makes Elon Musk the first trillionaire

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Elon Musk became the world's first trillionaire after shares of his rocket company SpaceX soared in Wall Street's biggest initial public offering of stock.

Shares in SpaceX jumped more than 19% after opening for trading Friday, a sign that investors are looking past the billions the company is losing and instead betting that its massive investments in satellites, orbital data centers and artificial intelligence will pay off in the future.

SpaceX opened around midday at \$150 a share, then rose to around \$168, before finishing the day just below \$161. That price gave the company a market value of \$2.1 trillion, making it the sixth largest public U.S. company — larger even than its founder and CEO's other big business, the electric vehicle maker Tesla.

Between his holdings in SpaceX and Tesla, where he is also CEO, Musk is now worth an estimated \$1.1 trillion, according to Forbes.

Why SpaceX is going public now

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Musk says SpaceX, founded in 2002, is going public now because it needs money to fund its ambitions of putting satellites and data centers in space and eventually establishing a colony of people on Mars.

He marked the opening of trading on Nasdaq by joining a ceremonial bell ringing from Starbase, the South Texas home of SpaceX.

He reiterated his lofty goals "to make life multiplanetary."

"Not just a few astronauts, I mean literally you," Musk said. "Whoever you are watching this, SpaceX wants to be able to take you to the moon, take you to Mars and ultimately beyond."

Known for his technological breakthroughs, as well as wild claims and missed deadlines, Musk was able to whip up enthusiasm for the IPO. The typical company going public has seen a 7% jump in its first day of trading, from 1980 through 2025, according to Jay Ritter, a professor at the University of Florida's Warrenton College of Business.

Institutional and retail investors alike jumped at the opportunity to buy a piece of the company at \$135 per share before trading began. The \$75 billion in proceeds SpaceX raised easily topped the previous record IPO from oil giant Saudi Aramco in 2019.

In addition to establishing a one-million person Martian colony, the company has promised to save humanity by establishing other outposts in space, launch data centers the size of football fields into orbit and outdo rivals Anthropic and OpenAI in the race to make money from artificial intelligence.

To reach its goals, SpaceX needs billions more than it currently takes in from its rocket and satellite business. Between the start of 2025 and March 31, 2026, the company, formally known as Space Exploration Technologies Corp., lost \$8.7 billion.

Pros and cons for investors

Betting on SpaceX is in many ways a bet on Musk himself. In an unusual arrangement that has drawn criticism from shareholder watchdogs, he holds 82% interest in a special B class of shares, giving him sweeping power to control the company even though his ownership stake is about half that.

"There's a lot of hype, but I see the faith that investors have in Musk," said Yordys Coro, an IT support contractor in Miami as he watched his \$14,000 investment in SpaceX shoot up to \$17,000 in just a few hours. "I'm going to hold on."

Wall Street bankers that helped take SpaceX public are also enthusiastic about the company — and the big fees they will earn — but not everyone thinks the stock price is justified.

Analysts at research firm Morningstar, which doesn't earn any investment banking fees, wrote that the IPO is "significantly overvalued."

Citing SpaceX's technology challenges, including shielding its orbiting datacenters from radiation damage and catching up to leaders in AI such as Anthropic and OpenAI, they estimated the company is only worth \$780 billion — less than half its IPO value.

SpaceX itself has hinted at the challenges, conceding in regulatory documents that some of its business plans rest on "unproven technologies." It also indicated that another part of the company, its artificial intelligence business called xAI, has no clear path to profitability and is burning cash to catch up with rivals.

On a livestreamed conference Thursday with the CEO of JPMorgan Chase, one of the investment banks making big money off the IPO, Musk offered few details.

He entertained the crowd with talk of "moon hotels," a future Martian colony and a network of Earth-orbiting data centers powered by the sun. But when asked about plans for his flagship chatbot offering Grok, he pivoted to talking about his satellites.

How Elon made his fortune

Still, Musk has pulled off the seemingly impossible before.

The now-trillionaire — on paper at least — made his initial fortune by creating two companies, Zip2 and PayPal, that netted him about \$200 million at sale. He used that money to start SpaceX and invest in Tesla, and defied the odds by creating a space company that figured out how to reuse rockets and a car company that made electric vehicles cool.

Musk has realized vast sums of wealth for himself, much of it in stock he has yet to cash in or grants for

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shares he'll only receive if Tesla or SpaceX hit ambitious performance targets.

His recent pay package from Tesla was so large it even drew criticism from the Vatican. At Tesla, he's worried shareholders by fighting with regulators or dividing his attention between multiple companies and last year by taking a role in the Trump administration.

But a rising stock price has cured all ills: Since it went public in 2010, Tesla has returned 20,000% for shareholders, or more than \$1.2 trillion in investor wealth.

SpaceX is the first of three "megacap" companies expected to go public this year, with Anthropic and OpenAI to follow. Nasdaq even revised its rules to allow SpaceX to gain entry into funds tied to its indexes in 15 days, which means investors will end up buying the rocket maker's shares much earlier.

Not all investors are thrilled about SpaceX potentially showing up in their holdings of index funds.

Officials from pension funds for firefighters, teachers and other workers in California and New York sent a letter to SpaceX last month decrying some of the provisions in its IPO, including mandatory arbitration of shareholder claims and how much power Musk will hold over the company.

US stocks rise after oil prices ease and SpaceX soars in its debut on Wall Street

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks rose Friday after oil prices fell again, and SpaceX soared in its highly anticipated debut on Wall Street.

The S&P 500 added 0.5% to close out its 10th winning week in the last 11. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 353 points, or 0.7%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.3%.

Stocks got a lift from a 3.4% drop for the price of Brent crude oil to \$87.33 per barrel, deepening its loss for the week. Oil prices have come down since President Donald Trump on Thursday called off his threat to launch strikes on Iran and said a potential deal with Iran may be imminent.

A deal to end the war could reopen the Strait of Hormuz and allow oil tankers to once again deliver crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide. Its near closure since the war began has sent the price of Brent up from roughly \$70 per barrel and caused a wave of painful inflation for the world.

Of course, financial markets have rallied in the past on hopes that an end to the war with Iran was near, only to get disappointed each time.

The bigger factor for Wall Street over the last week has actually been artificial-intelligence stocks, and how they have gone from roaring to records to suddenly turning lower. The concern is whether such stocks shot too high, too fast because of AI mania, and their careening moves have sometimes reversed direction by the hour.

SpaceX suggested plenty of demand still exists among investors for AI after its stock leaped 19.2% in its first day of trading. That gave Elon Musk's rocket company a total value of \$2.1 trillion, making it bigger than Exxon Mobil, Bank of America and Coca-Cola combined. In addition to building rockets, SpaceX also owns the artificial intelligence company xAI.

AI-related stocks were otherwise mixed following their roller-coaster moves over the last week. Micron Technology's drop of 1.4% was one of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500, but CoreWeave jumped 5% after learning it will join the Nasdaq 100 index later this month.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Adobe dropped 6.8% despite reporting stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

Its stock has lost nearly 42% so far this year, and it announced its chief financial officer is leaving the company on Monday. Adobe is already looking for a CEO to replace Shantanu Narayen, who announced in March that he is stepping aside after 18 years as Adobe's leader.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 37.16 points to 7,431.46. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 353.51 to 51,202.26, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 79.18 to 25,888.84.

In the bond market, Treasury yields rose to regain some of their sharp slide from the day before, when oil prices dropped following Trump's announcement. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed to 4.48%

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from 4.45% late Thursday.

High yields can slow entire economies and undercut prices for all kinds of investments, including stocks and cryptocurrencies. They hit investments seen as the most expensive in particular, and some critics are calling the AI industry a bubble where investment inflated too far.

Yields got a boost after a report suggested sentiment among U.S. consumers is not as bad as economists feared. The preliminary survey from the University of Michigan said sentiment improved by more than expected. U.S. consumers said they were feeling some relief after gasoline prices eased a bit early in the month.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rallied as they caught up to Thursday's big gains on Wall Street.

South Korea's Kospi jumped 4.6% and trimmed its losses from earlier this month taken because of sell-offs for AI-related stocks. The Kospi has nearly doubled since the start of the year.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 2.8%, and France's CAC 40 climbed 1.8% for two of the world's bigger moves.

As UFOs go mainstream, the jury is out on what the existence of alien life might mean for religion

By KRYSTA FAURIA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In "Disclosure Day," out Friday, Steven Spielberg is once again inviting audiences to ponder the existence of extraterrestrial life — and the implications it would have for religion on Earth.

But Spielberg is hardly the only one making headlines of late about UFOs and the possibility of life on other planets.

What was once considered fringe or conspiratorial has in recent months popped up everywhere from the White House to the Catholic Church, as public fascination with unidentified anomalous phenomena — or UAPs, as the government calls them — becomes more mainstream.

The Pentagon in May made public large swaths of UFO files with very little context, leaving curious sleuths to piece together their own interpretations. The dump came just weeks after former President Barack Obama set off a media frenzy for stating unambiguously in an interview that aliens are real, though he later tempered that take.

"Statistically, the universe is so vast that the odds are good there's life out there," the former president, who made a surprise visit to the "Disclosure Day" set, posted on social media. "I saw no evidence during my presidency that extraterrestrials have made contact with us. Really!"

Some religious adherents, as well as some nonbelievers, maintain that the existence of life on other planets might undermine many faiths because it would complicate assertions that humans are unique. But others argue the opposite.

"Belief in UFOs is really one of the best things that's happened to religion in a long time," said Diana Walsh Pasulka, a religion scholar at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. "It's a blow to the secular, materialist worldview."

An intersection of aliens, demons and Catholics

Even if broad interest in UAPs bolsters the case for an enchanted universe, some believers in religions such as Christianity think they are something to be wary of.

"I don't think they're aliens. I think they're demons," Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic convert, said in a recent podcast interview.

That sentiment was echoed by Monsignor Stephen Rossetti, formerly an exorcist with the Archdiocese of Washington. He was removed last week by the archbishop, who said statements by Rossetti "gravely undermine" Catholic teaching on demons and the devil.

"It's my personal belief that probably many, if not most, of these UFO sightings are in fact demons," Rossetti said in a May 29 video posted on his Facebook page. "Aliens, if there are aliens, don't possess people."

Christopher Baglow, who heads a science and religion initiative at the University of Notre Dame, was surprised by the firing given that Rossetti made clear in the video he was expressing his own opinion. Ba-

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glow speculated that there may be other factors behind the decision.

"I ask forgiveness for any ways that I have not been faithful to the teachings of the Church's Magisterium," Rosetti said in a statement online.

Despite the assertions by Vance and Rossetti about demons, Baglow maintains the Catholic Church has long been open to the possibility of extraterrestrial life. "Theologians have been speculating about this for centuries and the church has never ever taught one way or the other," he said.

While meeting with astronomy students last year at the Vatican, Pope Leo XIV spoke about the "ancient light of distant galaxies" and the "mysterious joy" provoked by the study of outer space. Some interpreted these remarks as tacit speculation about the possibility of life on other planets.

Extraterrestrials, old and new

In one sense, the idea of otherworldly beings coming to Earth can be traced back millennia.

"People would call it the plurality of worlds. So even back in the time of Socrates and Aristotle, there were Greek philosophers who talked about beings on other planets and other stars," Walsh Pasulka said.

But it wasn't until after 1945 that modern conceptions of UFOs began to develop, according to Jeffrey Kripal, a historian of religions at Rice University. "The flying saucer and the alien and the UFO — it's definitely a Cold War invasion narrative," he said.

That narrative explains why UAPs are often perceived as hostile to humans. But it's also evolved over time and led to the formation of some religions — like Scientology, which counts many a Hollywood celebrity among its adherents — that see extraterrestrials as good or even part of a divine plan. Some adherents to the Nation of Islam, for example, believe that its founder will inaugurate an apocalyptic return to Earth on a spaceship.

The International Raëlian Movement, also known as Raëlism, is a UFO religion that was founded in France in the 1970s. It is still practiced today, with its strongest followings in parts of Asia, Africa and Canada, according to Susan Palmer, a sociologist who studies new religious movements at Concordia University in Montreal.

Its founder, Raël, claims he is a direct descendant of Yahweh, whom Raël visited on the planet of Elohim in 1975. Raëlism claims the Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad are all hybrids of humans and extraterrestrials, as well as Raël's half brothers.

Of the groups she has studied, Palmer argued Raëlism is the most sympathetic toward UFOs. "They're not interested in extraterrestrial wars," she said.

But some think that sentiment might be growing.

Kripal, who heads Rice's archival collection of reported paranormal experiences called the Center for the Impossible, perceives an increasing openness to these kinds of conversations about the existence of UFOs — and the possibility that they are not hostile.

"People are reporting these experiences or these encounters with entities and they're religious through and through," he said. "My colleagues in the academy, they're really starting to listen in a different way."

FBI searches office of Ohio group that supports voter registration efforts

By CLAUDIA LAUER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

FBI agents have searched the office of an Ohio group that supports voter registration efforts, seizing documents and computer files, a board member of the organization said Friday.

It's the latest action by the Trump administration connected to voting or election operations in the states, and it comes in a state that is expected to have hotly contested races this fall for governor and U.S. Senate.

Federal agents showed up at the Cleveland office of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative on Thursday and spent hours questioning staff, said Prentiss Haney, a board member of the grassroots organization. The organization was founded in 2007 and describes its mission as fighting for criminal justice reform, racial justice and an expansion of voting rights.

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Federal agents also went to the homes of people who have worked with the organization, seeking interviews and information about alleged voter fraud, Haney said. He accused the agents of "intimidation tactics and harassment" and expressed concern that the investigation was designed to sow doubt in the coming elections.

The focus of the probe was unclear, but a person familiar with the matter said Friday that investigators were examining potential fraud violations. The person was not authorized to speak publicly about the investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Justice Department declined to comment on Friday, and a spokesperson for the FBI in Cleveland did not respond to messages seeking comment.

To obtain a search warrant, federal authorities must convince a judge that probable cause of criminal activity exists. Though the information authorities presented was not immediately released, Democrats expressed skepticism about the basis of a search that unfolded against persistent concerns of a politicized FBI and Justice Department.

The party's nominees for the state's top races issued statements Friday saying they were troubled by the FBI raid.

"Any attempts by federal law enforcement to intimidate eligible Ohioans from registering to vote are unacceptable," said Dr. Amy Acton, the state's former public health director, who won the state's Democratic primary for governor and is challenging Republican Vivek Ramaswamy.

Democrat Sherrod Brown, who is challenging Republican Sen. Jon Husted in the fall, called on the FBI to make public "any and all activities around these raids."

He added, "Any attempt to intimidate Ohio voters is wrong, and will not work."

Republicans have held the state's top elected seat for 20 years and hold both U.S. Senate seats but are concerned that Democratic momentum in this year's midterms could make them vulnerable.

The Justice Department during President Donald Trump's second term has launched several legal actions or investigations related to voting or state election operations.

The FBI has seized ballots and other records from the 2020 election for Georgia's Fulton County and Arizona's Maricopa County and from the 2024 election in Michigan's Wayne County. It also has been questioning election workers in Wisconsin's Milwaukee County. All four are in presidential battleground states.

The Justice Department has sued at least 30 states and the District of Columbia after they refused to hand over detailed voter data that includes dates of birth and partial Social Security numbers. It has said in court filings that it wants the information so it can run it through a Department of Homeland Security program that checks U.S. citizenship, although the program's accuracy has been questioned. The Justice Department has so far been on a losing streak in its lawsuits seeking to extract the data from the holdout states.

Early in his second term, Trump, a Republican, also ordered the Justice Department to investigate Act-Blue, the top fundraising platform for the Democratic Party.

Allegations of fraud in voter registration efforts are typically investigated by states and usually involve people working for groups that pay for sign-ups. Earlier this year, California officials opened an investigation into whether signature-gatherers were offering to pay people for signing a ballot petition. In 2025, Pennsylvania officials brought criminal charges against seven people for submitting fraudulent voter registration forms.

A key US government surveillance program is set to expire. A look at what that means

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key surveillance tool seen as vital in preventing terror attacks and catching foreign spies is set to expire Friday after congressional efforts to temporarily extend it failed in bipartisan fashion.

It's a significant lapse for the program known as Section 702, and even as President Donald Trump nominates a new national intelligence director more palatable to both Republicans and Democrats than his

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initial pick, it's unclear how soon lawmakers — set for recess — would be able to revive the spy program.

Still, there is not expected to be an immediate drop-off in intelligence collection given that a court order from March certified that government surveillance powers under the law could remain in effect for another year.

Section 702 allows for sweeping powers to sift through foreign communications

The provision is a part of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, known as FISA, and grants American spy agencies sweeping powers to collect and examine the communications of foreigners located outside the United States without first getting a warrant.

U.S. officials see the law as an invaluable national security tool that has helped disrupt potential acts of terrorism, yielded valuable insight into ransomware attacks on critical infrastructure and contributed to the killing of al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri in a 2022 drone strike.

The law was passed in 2008 as an effort to codify key aspects of a predecessor spy program created by President George W. Bush's Republican administration.

Since then, officials across administrations of both major political parties have warned that without the law the government won't be able to collect crucial intelligence overseas.

The program's renewal historically has been contentious

The periodic need to reauthorize the law has prompted protracted debate in Congress well before this year, including discussion over whether additional guardrails are needed to protect the privacy of Americans and their personal data.

That's because when the government eavesdrops on foreigners abroad, it also sweeps up the communications of American citizens and others in the U.S. who are in contact with those surveillance targets.

Civil liberties advocates have raised concerns over revelations that FBI analysts over the years have improperly queried the vast repository of intelligence collected through the program for information about Americans, including related to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters and the racial justice protests of 2020, as well as about state and federal political figures.

Some of those advocates have said the government should be required to have a warrant before examining communications collected from Americans. U.S. officials have said that a warrant would be legally unnecessary and overly cumbersome and that corrective measures have been implemented to reduce the number of improper queries.

Complicating the debate is the unlikely political alliances it has produced, uniting a coalition of lawmakers skeptical of government surveillance that includes both privacy-minded liberal Democrats and Republicans who still regard the intelligence community with suspicion over the investigation of ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 Republican presidential campaign.

The holdup this time is tied to pushback over acting intelligence pick Bill Pulte

Democrats balked when Trump picked Bill Pulte to serve as acting national intelligence director and refused to support a FISA extension until the selection was withdrawn. Pulte, a Trump loyalist with no known national security experience, has set off alarms by using his perch as director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency to facilitate dubious mortgage fraud investigations of perceived Trump adversaries.

A House vote this week that would have temporarily extended the program collapsed, with 19 Republicans and nearly all Democrats rejecting the temporary measure, 198-218. A Senate effort to approve its own versions also failed.

After those votes, Trump announced he was tapping Jay Clayton, the U.S. attorney in Manhattan who previously served as chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, as his permanent pick for director of national intelligence, or DNI. The pick was warmly received on Capitol Hill, but it was not enough to break the impasse before Friday's scheduled expiration.

Connecticut Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said that he has "known and respected" Clayton for decades and that had he been tapped a week ago, "lots of pain might have been avoided."

"His intelligence, temperament and deep commitment to public service will make him a terrific DNI,"

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Himes said.

The next steps for the spy powers provision

Before the congressional votes, Republican Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, had warned the Trump administration to prepare "for a potential significant gap in foreign intelligence collection." Other lawmakers since then have voiced similarly dire concerns.

The expiration is likely to be the first meaningful lapse of Section 702 since the law was created more than 15 years ago. In 2024, the Senate barely missed its midnight deadline before voting to approve a bill that was then signed by President Joe Biden, a Democrat, creating a brief lapse.

Despite this year's sunset of the statute, there's no expectation of any immediate halt to intelligence collection as the U.S. hosts a series of events this summer with potential national security concerns, including the World Cup and festivities surrounding the 250th birthday of the United States.

A March opinion from the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court certified the program's renewal for another 12 months, meaning that Section 702's authority is expected to remain intact through then. Even so, it's conceivable that without congressional reauthorization, communications companies forced to provide data to the government under the law could try to cease that compliance and argue that they cannot be compelled to cooperate.

David Hockney, iconic British artist known for his colorful landscapes and pool scenes, dies at 88

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — David Hockney, a treasured British artist whose paintings of shimmering pools and colorful iPad drawings became icons of contemporary art, has died, his publicist said Friday. He was 88.

Over a seven-decade career, Hockney explored and reimagined classical portraiture, landscape painting and pop art, working in painting, collage, photography and digital drawing.

Hockney was born in the north of England but lived much of his life in Southern California, making its sun-drenched suburban views a major motif.

Later in life he returned to Europe, finding renewed inspiration in the wooded hills of his native county of Yorkshire and the fields and trees of France's Normandy region. One of the most popular and critically lauded British artists of his generation, his works sold for record prices at auction.

Historian Simon Schama said it's no mystery why the appeal of his work endures.

"His work is admired — loved is not too strong a word — by the millions who, worldwide, flock to see it because it presupposes an expectation of pleasure," Schama wrote in an essay accompanying a 2025 Hockney exhibition in Paris.

Hockney's publicist, Erica Bolton, said he died at his home in London on Thursday, less than a month short of his 89th birthday. She did not give a cause of death.

He is survived by his longtime partner, Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima; his great-nephew and studio assistant, Richard Hockney; his brothers Philip and John; and numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.

Hockney was an icon of the swinging 60s

With his trademark round glasses and bleached-blond hair, Hockney was a well-known figure in the swinging British and American art scenes of the 1960s, even before he reached the age of 30. His paintings were just as distinctive, many of them creating a dreamlike world of patterned light bouncing off water and windows, and human forms rendered in flattened, simplified shapes in matte acrylic paint.

"I'm excited every day," he told the Los Angeles Times in 1979. "London has lots of dreary parts, but I never find anything dreary in Los Angeles."

Hockney was born July 9, 1937, in Bradford, a large industrial city whose chief export was woolen textiles. He spent his first two decades there before going to London's Royal College of Art. He made an impact even before his graduation, and art dealer John Kasmin took him into his stable of artists in 1961.

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His artistic influences ranged widely, including Renaissance portraits, 18th-century English artist William Hogarth's satirical drawings, 19th-century English painter J.M.W. Turner's landscapes, Pablo Picasso's experiments in Cubism and 20th-century American pop art.

He shared with other pop artists an interest in the polished surface of modern life. And, like Andy Warhol with his Brillo boxes and Campbell's soup cans, Hockney occasionally incorporated advertising labels, such as a British Typhoo Tea box used in his 1961 "Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style."

He saw success early in his career

He told The New York Times in 1964 that he enjoyed the burgeoning pop art scene in New York but wasn't sure he was part of it.

"I'm just an ordinary artist," he said. "I do admire American pop — in fact it seems that everything fresh-looking and vital in England these days has been coming from the U.S."

Nonetheless, he said in 1995 that he still considered himself "very much an artist in the English tradition."

Hockney, who was out as a gay man long before it was common, explored erotic themes, giving youthful male bodies the same tender scrutiny that artists had been giving the female nude for centuries.

Early works like "We Two Boys Together Clinging" and "Two Men in a Shower" celebrated gay relationships when homosexuality was still illegal in Britain.

Early in his career, two of his drawings were bought for the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

"The moment I first sold pictures to earn a living, I felt rich. I've been rich ever since," he told The Associated Press in 1995. "I didn't have much money, but I did what I wanted. ... You are a rich man if you do the things you want to do."

In 2018, his 1972 painting "Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)" sold at a Christie's auction for \$90.3 million, at the time a record for a living artist.

While many of his best-known paintings had American scenes, he also tackled British subjects. He immortalized his parents in several portraits and his friends Ossie Clark and Celia Birtwell in "Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy," a 1971 portrait voted one of Britain's greatest paintings in a 2005 BBC poll.

Hockney's work went beyond drawing and painting

Like many traditional artists, he considering drawing a fundamental skill and lamented that it wasn't taught as rigorously as it used to be.

"Human beings are the most interesting things we see, so they're the hardest to draw," he said in a 1996 AP interview.

Hockney also embraced other media, including printmaking, photo collage and video. He contributed costume and set designs for the theater and opera, including a celebrated production of "Tristan und Isolde" first staged in 1987 at the Los Angeles Opera.

When he took up photography, he fused genres, assembling individual photos into elaborate collages like "Pearblossom Highway, 11-18th April, 1986," built up of individual views of a desert highway intersection.

"My photographer friends said it was a painting," Hockney told the AP in 2001. "I said it's a photograph; I used a camera."

Later he began to draw on iPads, which became his favorite tool.

In the early 2000s, he looked afresh at the fields and forests of Yorkshire in a series of landscape paintings that combined bold color with minute attention to the texture of snow on a hillside or a blossom on a hawthorn hedge. They featured in a 2017 exhibition at Tate Britain in London that was visited by half a million people and moved to the Pompidou Center in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Hockney used the English landscape for inspiration in his design for a stained-glass window installed at Westminster Abbey in 2018 to celebrate the long reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

King Charles III paid tribute to "one of life's true originals" as he mourned "a man whose irrepressible charm, talent and constant innovation will be most sorely missed, but whose dazzling creativity lives on in galleries and museums around the world."

He worked right up until his death

In 2019, he moved to Normandy, where during the 2020 coronavirus lockdown he produced joyous iPad

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drawings of springtime for his friends. His message — “Do remember they can’t cancel the spring” — was emblazoned in neon across the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris when it hosted a huge Hockney exhibition that opened in April 2025.

Art critic Estelle Lovatt said Hockney “changed how we see the world.”

“He was one of the first artists to use a fax machine,” she told the AP. “He was one of the first artists to use the Polaroid camera to make collages. He was one of the first artists to use really, really vibrant colors.”

An unrepentant cigarette smoker who railed against government anti-smoking rules, Hockney complained when a poster for the 2025 exhibition was banned from the Paris Metro because it showed him holding a cigarette.

The announcement of his death from his publicist noted that Hockney was “a committed life-long and defiant smoker, expressing the pleasure in life it brought him. ... He smoked up to the end.”

Hockney had a minor stroke in 2012 and was increasingly deaf in later years — something he said improved his visual perception.

“If you lose one sense, you gain other senses, and I feel I could see space clearer,” he told the AP in 2017. He never stopped working.

“It’s my work that keeps me young,” Hockney told the Sun newspaper in 2017. “I’ve been a professional painter for 60 years. Sixty years of getting up every day and doing exactly what I want to do.”

Pope tells traffickers of migrants in the Canary Islands: Stop, repent or face God’s wrath

Associated Press undefined

SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, Spain (AP) — Pope Leo XIV warned people smugglers on Friday that they will face God’s wrath for exploiting the desperation of migrants, demanding they stop and repent during his final day in this epicenter of the African migration route to Europe.

For the second day in a row in the Canary Islands, the American pope insisted on the inherent dignity and rights of migrants and demanded they be welcomed and integrated into society, in some of his strongest comments on the politically divisive issue.

“Break those chains and free those you hold in bondage,” Leo said in a message to human traffickers that he delivered during a meeting with humanitarian aid organizations that help migrants on the island of Tenerife.

Leo was wrapping up his weeklong trip to Spain in the Spanish archipelago, which is closer to Africa than the Iberian Peninsula and is a key point of entry for migrants who make the perilous Atlantic crossing from West Africa.

His return to Rome was delayed when his Iberia charter flight developed a technical problem. King Felipe VI offered his private plane instead, and Leo accepted. The problem couldn’t be fixed, so Iberia said it was sending a separate aircraft from Madrid to fetch the journalists and Vatican officials left behind in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

It was the first time in decades that a papal flight had experienced a problem so serious that it required the pope to deplane and change his travel plans.

The pope had been fulfilling a wish of Pope Francis to visit the islands to commemorate the thousands of lives lost at sea. He is also drawing attention to the Catholic Church’s biblically-mandated mantra to “welcome the stranger,” amid anti-migrant sentiment in Europe and the Trump administration’s mass deportation program in his native United States.

During the encounter with aid groups in Tenerife, Leo implored receiving communities to integrate people fleeing war, poverty and climate change and spare them from the “silent shipwreck” of abandonment when they are left on the streets with nothing after surviving perilous crossings.

“A human conscience, and even more so a Christian conscience, cannot remain indifferent in the face of these graveyards of the sea, to the victims of shipwrecks and the lack of aid,” Leo said. “Every life lost on these routes is a failure for the human family.”

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A deadly passage and a warning to traffickers

The Canary Islands have long been a stepping stone for migrants trying to reach Europe from West Africa and Morocco.

While people smugglers and human traffickers operate the Atlantic route, there are also many self-organized boats of migrants, including many former fishermen from Senegal who were left without income due to overfishing in recent years.

Migrant arrivals in the Canary Islands peaked in 2024 at nearly 47,000. They have fallen dramatically, with over 3,000 people landing there in the first five months of 2026.

Because of the vastness of the ocean and scarcity of rescue ships or monitoring, some experts consider the Atlantic route more deadly than the more well-known central Mediterranean smuggling route from Libya and Tunisia to Italy. Since 2020, several West African boats have been found in the Caribbean and Latin America with only dead bodies on board after drifting across the Atlantic, pushed by trade winds and currents.

Leo directed his remarks Friday to the criminal organizations and individual smugglers who organize these "death routes" to Europe. Such smugglers charge thousands of euros a person and often force their passengers into prostitution or other forms of black market labor by withholding their documents to pay off the debt.

"Stop. Repent," Leo said in his message to traffickers, emphasizing each word in Spanish and drawing a sustained applause from the crowd. "For every life lost, every family deceived, every body subjugated, every woman threatened, every worker exploited, you will have to appear before divine justice."

"Repent while there is still time, for God's mercy can reach even the most hardened sinner, but it enters only through the narrow gate of truth, justice and conversion," he said.

With his two-day visit to the Canary Islands, Leo has confirmed himself as the heir of Francis' migration preaching, which was a priority of Francis' 12-year pontificate and often caused friction with U.S. and European powers.

History's first U.S.-born pope has not only echoed Francis' message and gestures, he has expanded and amplified them during a deeply symbolic visit. Upon arrival on Thursday, Leo threw a bouquet of flowers into the sea from a port nicknamed the "Dock of Shame" in 2020, when migrants were forced to live in squalor during a spike in their arrivals.

Leo's gesture mimicked the one Francis made in 2013 when he visited Lampedusa, Sicily, another flashpoint in Europe's migration drama, and denounced the "globalization of indifference" that the world showed asylum seekers.

But in a sign Leo is making the papacy his own, the 70-year-old pope has added a new gesture to his repertoire: After a onetime migrant offered his testimony during Leo's encounter Friday, the pope did the viral "6-7" hand gesture that's popular with young people as he joked alongside him. That earned the pope cheers and applause from the crowd.

Leo meets with migrants at reception center

In the Canary Islands and in remarks on the Spanish mainland, Leo reaffirmed the right of migrants to flee but also to stay home, demanding their countries of origin provide the necessary economic and security conditions. He shamed European countries that turn their back on migrants' plights, and said Christian cannot remain indifferent.

On Friday, he noted that for the Catholic Church, the process of integrating migrants into a community can become a chance at spreading the faith, "without imposing" it and in respect of the migrants' own beliefs.

Leo opened the final day of his trip by visiting the Las Raíces migrant camp. Leo drew a round of applause when he went off-script to tell migrants that he would speak in French and English, the language spoken by many of the people living in the camp.

One woman told him of the desperation that drove her to leave her homeland and family, the trauma of the crossings, and her gratitude at finding safety and a new life.

"We aren't asking for privileges. We aren't asking for compassion. We just want respect, humanity and the chance to live with dignity," said the woman, identified as Bousso Diouf.

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Next month, on July 4, the American pope will spend U.S. Independence Day on the island of Lampedusa, where Francis in 2013 first denounced the "globalization of indifference" the world shows migrants.

Iranians endure war fatigue and soaring prices as conflict deepens domestic woes

By AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Iranians are living between confusion and exhaustion as the country and its economy are squeezed between war and multiplying crises at home.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday that he called off fresh strikes on Iran as he claimed a deal to end the war was imminent. Back-and-forth strikes earlier this week pushed a shaky ceasefire to the edge of collapse, which, if it happens, would inflict more havoc on Iran's battered economy.

Strikes on steel and petrochemical industries and energy infrastructure earlier in the war have spurred a wave of business closures and job losses in Iran, where people now struggle to afford groceries in the face of triple-digit food inflation.

Many Iranians are desperate for peace

Along with the cratering economy, the specter of war has left many people desperate for an end to the turmoil and deeply anxious about the future. Huraz Ahmadi, a 19-year-old street vendor in the capital of Tehran, said he feared renewed fighting.

"I don't think they will reach an agreement, given the way things are going. But I hope they make a deal. An agreement is much better than war," Ahmadi said. "In wars, innocent and good people die. I personally lost a relative."

In the past year, Iranians have faced two wars — first Israel's 12-day war in 2025 against Iran followed by a joint assault with the U.S. that began on Feb. 28. Both attacks were launched in the middle of talks about Iran's nuclear program.

Fresh U.S. strikes on Monday sowed confusion in Iran's capital following growing optimism that Tehran and Washington were nearing a deal. One Tehran resident in his late 20s said the echo of explosions and air defenses in the capital triggered "maybe a half hour of panic." Long lines formed at gas stations, but people returned within hours to "living normally," he said.

"War is also becoming normal. And that is very upsetting," the resident said, speaking on the condition of anonymity out of security fears.

"Everybody is stressed out for a thousand reasons," he added. "Our lives are constantly in this political game where we can't plan anything or know what's going to happen."

A country 'tired of instability'

A critical demand in talks for Iranian negotiators is that the U.S. deliver some kind of sanctions or economic relief, besides lifting a naval blockade that has throttled Iran's oil exports as well as imports of raw materials and other goods.

Many business owners are struggling to survive, a member of a council representing Iranian industrialists said.

"The main concern of many industrialists and entrepreneurs is the survival of their businesses and production. The concern is about the disruption of the supply chain of raw materials, parts and machinery due to the cruel U.S. blockade," Mehdi Bostanchi said.

Tehran-based Bostanchi, who owns a company that makes ventilation systems, is part of a trade group for factory owners across Iran. Its members include textile, food and metal producers and printing firms.

Bostanchi said uncertainty over any deal to end the war is stifling the ability of businesses to plan ahead and look toward any kind of recovery.

"Society is tired of instability and does not want a wider war to break out," he added.

Iran's rial currency has also lost over half its value in the past year. Exchange rates have crashed to around 1.8 million rials to the dollar, compared with 41,600 rials 10 years ago.

Economic woes stoke unrest and fear

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The deepening economic problems have stoked unrest in Iran. In January, security forces shot thousands of anti-government protesters in the streets. Arrests of protesters and those expressing support for them has continued through the war.

Alongside fear of their own leaders, Iranians who oppose the government also fear a return to open war, said a social media influencer and therapist who lives in central Tehran and has participated in past anti-government protests.

"The war isn't anything but destruction for us. And in reality, the attacks that happened killed a number of ordinary people and destroyed a number of homes and residential buildings," she said, speaking on the condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution.

Residents contacted by The Associated Press also expressed worries that renewed conflict would lead Iranian authorities to cut internet service again. Repeated blackouts since the January protests have crippled what was a strong digital economy and stoked job losses. A partial restoration has seen a limited uptick in connectivity.

Next steps are unclear

A few hours after threatening to launch further attacks, Trump posted on social media that significant points in the negotiations "have been brought to the highest level of Iranian leadership and approved." But a spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Esmail Baghaei, said in a live phone call on state television that mediators were active and nothing had been finalized to end the conflict.

Iran's ability to withstand U.S.-Israeli assaults and to close the globally strategic Strait of Hormuz has also rallied the Islamic Republic's hard-liner base. Authorities have organized nightly rallies in past weeks as they try to project popular support for a tough stance in U.S. talks.

Hamid Reza Bani Ebrahimi, a 47-year-old merchant, said he opposed any agreement that would limit what he sees as Iran's right to enrich uranium and develop nuclear technology. Israel and the U.S. have repeatedly struck sites and figures linked with the country's atomic program.

"Our scientists worked so hard to acquire this technology, and then they came and martyred them," Bani Ebrahimi said.

Abdullah Hosseini, a 45-year-old university professor in Tehran, said Iranian strikes on Gulf states and Jordan this past week were part of an effort to deter further attacks.

"I don't like war. I am extremely worried about people and children being killed," Hosseini said. "But sometimes war is necessary, and now is the time for Iran to stand against its enemy."

But Tehran-based analyst Rahman Ghahremanpour said the back-and-forth strikes this week had deepened concerns in Iran that the conflict "could turn into a crisis without end and in reality make running the country more difficult" in the face of economic pressures.

"Both America and Iran are looking for a way out of this situation with honor and claiming victory so they can strengthen their own domestic situation," he said.

Supreme Court nixes Alabama request for nitrogen execution, which lower court ruled unconstitutional

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

ATMORE, Ala. (AP) — An Alabama man facing the death penalty by nitrogen gas was spared Thursday as the U.S. Supreme Court refused to set aside a lower-court ruling that found the method is unconstitutionally cruel, issuing a brief order that came well after the hour originally planned to initiate Jeffery Lee's execution.

The justices decided not to lift an injunction blocking Alabama from carrying out what would have been the nation's ninth execution by nitrogen gas, rejecting a last-minute legal battle by the state as it sought to carry out the sentence in the evening. A spokesperson for the Alabama Department of Corrections said the execution was off for the evening and the state would not try another method.

The high court voted 6-3 and did not explain its reasoning. Three of the conservative justices — Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Neil Gorsuch — said they would grant Alabama's request to lift the injunction

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and let the execution go forward.

In a statement the legal team for Lee, 49, hailed the decision and noted that his jury had voted for a sentence of life, which a judge overruled.

"His jury voted for life. Two courts ruled the method unconstitutional. Today, the Constitution prevailed," the statement said. "Now Governor Ivey can finish what the jury started: restore the jury's verdict of life without parole."

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall promised the families of the victims that authorities will continue to seek justice, saying in a statement: "The State is prepared to do whatever is necessary to see Mr. Lee's lawful sentence carried out."

"Tonight's ruling is a miscarriage of justice, not for us, but for Jimmy Ellis and Elaine Thompson, who Jeffery Lee brutally and senselessly murdered and left on the floor of their place of business," Marshall said. "Tonight I am also keeping their families in mind, many of whom were prepared to witness the final act of justice be served."

Prison officials said Lee did not request a final meal Thursday but had potato chips, Skittles, water and a Sprite in the hours ahead of his possible execution.

The ruling was at least a temporary, rare victory for opponents of capital punishment in a state that has had one of the busiest death chambers in the country. And it capped an extraordinary legal back-and-forth over the humaneness of nitrogen gas as an execution method.

Legal challenge wended its way through the courts

Lee filed a lawsuit challenging Alabama's protocol as a violation of the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment, and U.S. District Judge Emily Marks ruled the method constitutional in May.

But a three-judge panel from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed her decision Monday, saying the three minutes it could take for an inmate to lose awareness is an "intolerable" time frame "given the suffering that would likely take place under Alabama's nitrogen hypoxia protocol."

Marks reevaluated the case and ruled again Tuesday saying Lee had shown "that the protocol constitutes cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment." The state appealed to the Supreme Court.

"If that ruling stands, it would be unprecedented in American history. Not only does it portend the first-ever permanent ban on a legislatively enacted method, but it would expand the concept of cruelty well beyond the bounds of the Eighth Amendment," lawyers with the Alabama Attorney General's Office wrote.

Lee's lawyers asked the high court to keep the execution on hold, saying in a response that Alabama was asking it to intervene at the eleventh hour "to allow an execution that has been found unconstitutional to proceed."

The decision blocks Lee's execution in the immediate future, but it is unclear how long the reprieve will last. The state maintains that the nitrogen method is constitutional.

Marks did not block the state from executing Lee with one of Alabama's other approved methods, the electric chair or lethal injection.

Nitrogen executions introduced in the state 2 years ago

Alabama began using nitrogen gas to carry out some executions in 2024. The method involves strapping a respirator to a person's face and replacing breathable air with pure nitrogen gas, causing death from lack of oxygen.

Nitrogen has been used in eight executions in the United States — seven times in Alabama and once in Louisiana. Lee was scheduled to be the ninth.

During the previous Alabama nitrogen executions, the inmates shook, pulled at the restraints and exhibited labored breathing. During the state's last execution by nitrogen gas, 30 minutes elapsed between Anthony Boyd exhibiting signs of being impacted by the gas and state officials closing the curtain to the viewing room to signal the execution was complete.

The state has maintained that the method is constitutional and causes no more suffering than other execution methods.

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Lee, who is currently housed at William C. Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, was convicted of two counts of capital murder for killing Ellis and Thompson while robbing a pawnshop on Dec. 12, 1998.

Prosecutors said Lee entered Jimmy's Pawnshop with a sawed-off shotgun and shot Ellis, the owner, and Thompson, an employee.

Alabama no longer allows judicial overrides in capital cases

A jury voted 7-5 to give Lee a sentence of life imprisonment. However a judge overrode that and sentenced him to death.

Alabama ended the practice of judicial override in 2017 and no longer allows a judge to disregard a jury's sentencing decision in death penalty cases.

Bestselling author John Grisham called on Gov. Kay Ivey to honor the jury's decision and commute Lee's sentence to life without parole.

"The practice of a judge overriding a jury was declared unconstitutional and so indefensible that Alabama itself abolished it in 2017," Grisham said in a statement. "Jeffery Lee's jury made its decision, the Alabama Legislature later agreed that juries, not judges, should decide life or death sentences."

Ivey, for her part, said Thursday night: "While I am disappointed the Supreme Court did not allow the state to proceed with Lee's chosen method of execution, I remain committed to ensuring that justice is ultimately served for his victims."

Where Trump has lost support with independents, according to AP-NORC polling

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Independents have grown increasingly unhappy with President Donald Trump during his second term, a new AP-NORC polling analysis finds, particularly those without a college degree.

The analysis from researchers at The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that while about half of independents without a college education had a positive view of Trump around the 2024 election, his approval with that group fell to about one-quarter this spring. That shift has erased the large education gap that existed among independents in the months before Trump took office for his second term, with independents now holding similarly negative views of the president regardless of their level of education.

The analysis was conducted by aggregating nearly two dozen AP-NORC polls conducted between July 2024 and April 2026, allowing for a deeper look at how support for Trump changed during several distinct periods, including the last six months of 2024, the first 100 days of Trump's presidency, the summer of 2025 when the Big Beautiful Bill passed, last fall's government shutdown and the beginning of the Iran war.

The compiled polling shows a steady decline among independents throughout Trump's second term. His standing has also dropped among several small but important groups that moved toward him in the 2024 presidential election, including Black and Hispanic independents.

More Americans than ever consider themselves independents, and they are among the groups that shifted toward Trump in the 2024 presidential election. Any erosion in that support could signal trouble for Trump and Republicans headed into the midterm elections, which are often seen as reflection of how voters feel about their governing party.

Tafari Torres, a senior research associate at NORC who co-authored the analysis, noted that while Democrats' and Republicans' views of Trump have held largely steady in his second term, independents' opinions are still moving. "Independents are, broadly, the people who are reacting to the events and dropping in their support," he said.

Dramatic declines during Trump's first 100 days

Trump's return to the White House was fueled, in part, by independent voters who saw him as the stronger candidate on key issues like the economy. The new analysis, which looks at Trump's favorability and presidential approval ratings, shows that once he took the helm, their views soured quickly.

Independents without a college degree had a much more positive view of Trump than college-educated

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independents did during and just after the 2024 election, but that shifted in the first few months of his term. Positive views of Trump among independents without a college degree fell from 48% in the months before he returned to office to 31% in polling conducted during Trump's first 100 days back in office. Those warm views declined even further, to about one-quarter, during the government shutdown and the early months of 2026.

Only about 3 in 10 college-educated independents, by contrast, had a positive view of Trump before he returned to office, making their drop to about one-quarter much less dramatic.

"The decline among no-college independents was steeper and it was greater than the slight decline in college independents," said Sean Collins, a research associate at NORC who co-authored the analysis. "That was surprising, especially given, when you think of Trump's coalitions, those without college degrees is usually one of the ones that that stands out."

Hispanic, younger independents grow disenchanted

Americans without a college degree have long been a key part of Trump's coalition. But Trump also won in 2024 by making gains among groups that tend to support Democrats, including Hispanic adults.

About 4 in 10 independent voters — 42% — voted for Trump in 2024, up from 37% in the 2020 presidential election. Independent voters without a college degree were a little more likely to back Trump over former Vice President Kamala Harris in the last election, according to AP VoteCast, and Hispanic independents were about evenly split between the two.

The picture looks much bleaker for the president now.

Nearly half of Hispanic independents — 46% — saw Trump favorably in the polling conducted around the presidential election. His approval among these adults dropped quickly in his second term, falling as low as 15% during last fall's government shutdown before landing around one-quarter in the spring.

Younger independents also became less supportive of the president, while independents age 60 and older remained mostly stable. Other AP-NORC polling has pointed to Trump losing ground among younger Republicans over inflation concerns and Hispanic Americans growing increasingly discontented.

"The gains Trump appeared to make during the election, I don't know if they're sticking around. He's experienced some significant shifts among those people," Torres said. "From our research, they don't appear to be permanent gains."

The economy is frustrating many independents

Polling suggests that the economy is at the root of many Americans' frustrations with Trump, including independents.

About half of independents who supported Trump in 2024 said inflation was the single most important factor for their vote, AP VoteCast found, and most expressed high levels of concern about the cost of food and gas.

More than a year into Trump's second term, inflation remains high, fueled by gas prices that remain elevated as the Iran war continues. An AP-NORC poll conducted in April found that about 3 in 10 independents were "extremely" or "very" concerned about being able to afford groceries in the last few months, and a similar share were worried about being able to afford gas.

The analysis found that Americans' views of the U.S. economy tend to align with their view of the president. Those with negative views of the country's economy tended to have negative views of Trump, and about 8 in 10 independents described the U.S. economy this spring as poor.

The latest AP-NORC polling from May found that only about 3 in 10 independents approve of how Trump is handling the economy, in line with the roughly 3 in 10 who said that at the beginning of his second term. The April poll found only about 1 in 10 independents — 12% — approved of how Trump was handling the cost of living.

Taylor Swift becomes the youngest woman inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame at age 36

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Taylor Swift became the youngest woman ever inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame Thursday night at age 36.

"It was instinctual. No one taught me how to do it," she said of songwriting through a raspy voice she attributed to screaming along to the night's performances and Wednesday night's historic NBA game between the New York Knicks and the San Antonio Spurs.

She told the room about her family uprooting their lives to move her from Pennsylvania to Nashville, Tennessee, as a tween.

"I will never be able to express my gratitude," the singer-songwriter said while holding back tears — crediting their sacrifice for her career.

She offered young songwriters advice: "You really have to prioritize what you love, down to your very core. Because you'll need that."

Steven Spielberg introduced Swift with a surprise speech about the power of songwriting. "There is something undeniable about how songs imprint on our souls," he said, before changing his focus to Swift. "Somehow Taylor knows us all too well."

Swift started her speech by acknowledging Spielberg. "Because of examples like Steven's, I trusted my imagination," she said.

The Gen Z singer Sombr launched Swift's segment by performing "Cardigan" and "Dear John" in front of her.

Swift has brought new eyes to this year's ceremony and undeniably shaped contemporary pop music trends with her songwriting. Swift is the youngest woman inducted, but Stevie Wonder, who started his recording career at 13, was the youngest ever inducted, it was announced on stage.

It was a notable moment in an evening full of them, where Swift, Kiss' Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley, Christopher "Tricky" Stewart, Alanis Morissette, Kenny Loggins and more were honored.

A night of celebrating songwriters

Tamar Braxton opened the gala at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City with a spirited tribute to a new inductee — the game-changing R&B songwriter, producer and rapper Christopher "Tricky" Stewart — with one of the biggest songs he's known for: Beyoncé's "Single Ladies."

He's also responsible for singer-songwriter Rihanna's "Umbrella," Mariah Carey's "Touch My Body" and Justin Bieber's "Baby."

Dallas Austin, a songwriter and producer known for work with Boyz II Men and Madonna, introduced Stewart. "Think about that catalog," he said, listing off those zeitgeist-shifting records. "Those are cultural moments."

Stewart thanked God, his family, artists he's worked with and mentors — giving a special shout out to Grammy award-winning music producer Antonio "L.A." Reid and the iconic singer-songwriter Babyface. "I wanted to be like L.A. and Baby," he reflected.

Kiss founders Simmons and Stanley — two and a half years after the band's farewell — were also recognized for their glam rock classics "Rock and Roll All Nite" and "I Love It Loud." The Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan covered the former, a fittingly fiery introduction for the band. He was joined by Goo Goo Dolls' frontman John Rzeznik for the latter.

Simmons wasn't present; Stanley said that he had a family emergency.

"Songs are the messenger," he said — the foundation of "every show."

Soft rock legend Kenny Loggins ("Footloose," "Danny's Song") and the alt-rock icon Morissette were also inducted.

For the latter, Brandi Carlile performed "Uninvited" alongside SistaStrings, before introducing Morissette.

"Writing to me is not a hobby," Morissette said, it's critical. "It's write or die." Then she performed "Mary

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Jane" and "You Oughta Know" from her 1995 album "Jagged Little Pill."

For Loggins, Gavin DeGraw performed "Danny's Song," before Loggins told the story behind the tune in his acceptance speech.

Acknowledging writers and their hits

Taylor Dayne and Madison Cunningham performed Tina Turner classics written by Terry Britten and Graham Lyle in honor of their induction; John Fogerty was honored with the Johnny Mercer Award.

"I got my songs back!" Fogerty said, ending a nearly 30-minute speech, referencing the fact that he won the rights back to his catalog at age 80. Then he ran through a medley of his hits: "Proud Mary," "Fortunate Son," and "Have You Ever Seen the Rain" among them.

The songwriter Walter Afanasieff (Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You") was also recognized, a segment that began with an introduction by actor Jeremy Renner and included a monster medley of his biggest songs by R&B singer Sheléa, kicking off with his Christmas classic six months early.

"I wanted to be The Beatles," he said of falling in love with songwriting in his speech. "Sixty years later, I got to produce Paul McCartney."

An established tradition

British singer-songwriter RAYE received the prestigious Hal David Starlight Award. She ended her speech by stating that songwriters deserve a cut of master royalties.

Last year's inductees included George Clinton, The Doobie Brothers, Ashley Gorley, Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins, The Beach Boys' Mike Love and Tony Macaulay.

The Songwriters Hall of Fame was established in 1969 to honor those creating popular music. A songwriter with a notable catalog of songs qualifies for induction 20 years after the first commercial release of a song.

Some already in the hall include Gloria Estefan, Carole King, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora, Elton John and Bernie Taupin, Brian Wilson, James Taylor, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, Lionel Richie, Bill Withers, Neil Diamond and Phil Collins.

What to know about the EU's new rules on migration and asylum as they come into effect

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS, RENATA BRITO and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union is set to implement a new set of rules Friday governing how each of its 27 member states will deal with irregular migration and asylum seekers.

The European Migration and Asylum Pact is the culmination of years of grueling negotiations that overhauled the previous system, which was widely considered a failure and gave far-right parties a potent issue to win votes.

All EU members were meant to be prepared for Friday's implementation by adapting laws, training staff and beefing up border infrastructure. But even the European Commission admits no member is completely ready.

European Commissioner for Migration Magnus Brunner hailed the pact as a milestone but noted "it is only the beginning and not the end."

Human rights advocates warn the pact could add to the difficulties asylum seekers face while trying to find safe haven in the EU.

Here is what to know:

Screening and fast-tracking border procedures

Under the new rules, foreigners will be screened at EU borders for up to seven days before they are admitted in line with a common procedure.

"The pact turns 27 different ways of doing things into one," said Hans Leijten, executive director of Europe's border security and coast guard agency Frontex.

Asylum seekers deemed to pose a "security threat" or from countries listed as "safe" by the EU will go through faster asylum procedures of three months instead of six. Some applicants may be kept at the

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border while their cases are processed. They will be given only one chance to appeal a rejected application.

The European Commission says some member states still need to implement a new biometric database called Eurodac that will register and store information of adults and children as young as 6.

Many more countries need to set up border facilities to handle screening, asylum processing and detentions. Work also is needed to ensure there is independent rights monitoring at the border, the commission said.

Swiftly returning rejected asylum seekers

One of the pillars of the new pact is to speed up voluntary and forced returns of rejected asylum seekers by automatically issuing return orders when an application is rejected. A clear political priority of the center and far-right politicians who swept to power in 2024 across the EU is that returnees are slated to be sent to countries deemed safe like Syria and Bangladesh.

The European Agency for Asylum said there were about 802,000 pending first-time asylum applications in March.

Member states also are working with EU lawmakers to allow for the creation of "return hubs" in third countries where they can send rejected asylum seekers who can't be repatriated. Questions remain about deportation centers that are being quietly negotiated between a group of five nations and potential partners abroad.

Sharing the burden between member nations

Among the most contentious issues that has divided EU countries was sharing responsibility for asylum seekers, especially in times of crisis. Because migrants must apply for asylum in the first EU country they enter, front-line countries along the Mediterranean like Greece and Italy have long complained they bear the weight of irregular arrivals.

Citing their inability to cope under pressure, these countries allowed passage of many migrants to northern and western Europe without permission. This shifted some of the burden onto northern countries like Germany and Sweden that saw asylum applications soar to record levels, bringing their migration systems to the brink of collapse.

The new pact includes a solidarity mechanism to ensure border countries aren't left on their own. Other EU members will either take in a share of asylum seekers or offer financial support to compensate. Countries can also offset their share if they receive migrants through secondary movements, meaning when a migrant arrives in one country and moves on to another.

Not all member states were happy with the solution. Poland continues to suspend the right to asylum, citing the weaponization of migration on its border with Belarus. Hungary's new prime minister, Péter Magyar, is continuing many of the hard-line immigration policies of his predecessor, Viktor Orbán, including a refusal to accept migrants.

Pact will not bring immediate change

The commission has acknowledged work on implementing the pact will continue after June 12 since no country is fully ready.

"It won't be a like a light switch turning on June 12," said Susan Fratzke, a senior policy analyst with the Migration Policy Institute. "Some of these things will take time."

The lack of clarity and consistency is problematic, said Susanna Zanfrini, director of the International Rescue Committee's Italy office.

That ambiguity "creates uncertainty for both people seeking protection and the organizations supporting them at the very moment they most need clear information about their rights, options, and access to support to survive, recover and rebuild their lives," she said.

Human rights groups cry foul

Human rights advocates have criticized the new rules, arguing they undermine the right to seek asylum by rushing assessments.

They say accelerated procedures introduce racial profiling while denying international protection to applicants with legitimate claims, and they warn of an expected spike in prolonged detentions at EU borders.

Judith Sunderland, senior refugee and migrant rights adviser at Human Rights Watch, said the new pact

"slams the door in the face of people who deserve to be treated with dignity and to have a fair hearing of their claims for protection."

Lukas Gehrke, the Brussels chief for the International Organization For Migration, said that while the EU ramps up deportations, it should also provide more, not less, funding for integration programs for the millions legally allowed to stay in the bloc.

Disaster drills helped prevent more deaths when powerful quake hit the southern Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine officials said Friday that years of disaster-preparedness drills helped prevent a larger casualty toll when one of the strongest earthquakes in 50 years struck the south and left 46 people dead with 38 others missing.

The 7.8 magnitude offshore quake, which struck Monday off Sarangani province, injured at least 688 people and displaced more than 45,000 people, about half them still in emergency shelters, after the quake damaged more than 12,600 houses across farming towns and cities.

The numbers of dead and missing were considerably lowered after multiple verifications, the Office of Civil Defense said in a statement.

Many of the displaced were still too traumatized to return home because of strong aftershocks, officials said.

Days after the earthquake hit, more videos of the chaotic moments have been posted on social media showing horrified crowds witnessing the collapse of small buildings, and flag-raising ceremonies turning chaotic when the ground started to shake on the first day of school after a long summer break.

Students are seen on videos screaming in panic, but staying seated or standing still outside school buildings, with some covering their heads with their hands as teachers admonished them to calm down.

One video, which has gone viral on Facebook with millions of views, showed dozens of grade-schoolers screaming and breaking into tears as they sat on a tree-ringed school ground, which visibly swayed them from side to side. A tin roof shed nearby later collapsed with a loud thud, prompting many to dash away, but were asked by teachers to return and stay seated.

The grade school in the coastal town of Malita in Davao Occidental province reported no injuries from the quake.

"This incident serves as a reminder of the importance of earthquake preparedness and the value of regular disaster response drills," the Mahayahay elementary school said in a statement.

Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said years of disaster-preparedness drills helped people anticipate and brace for extreme events like Monday's quake, one of the strongest to hit the archipelago in a half-century.

He said that it was also fortunate that the quake hit at 7:37 a.m., a few minutes before work and classes were to start indoors.

"It's good that our efforts to educate people on what to do when earthquakes hit somehow paid off," Bacolcol told The Associated Press.

He expressed concern, however, over the collapse of some buildings that he said should have withstood the powerful quake, if construction standards based on the country's building code were followed.

Ednar Dayanghirang, director of the Office of Civil Defense in a quake-hit region of about 5 million people, said that regular disaster-preparedness drills helped reduce casualties in many ways, including by preventing deadly stampedes.

"We required all school principals to take one-day courses on incident management, then they appointed disaster-response teams among teachers to deal with earthquakes, tsunamis," Dayanghirang said. "They listened and they learned."

The Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, is often hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions because of its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the ocean.

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Today in History: June 13

First Pentagon Papers excerpts published

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, June 13, the 164th day of 2026. There are 201 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 13, 1971, The New York Times began publishing excerpts of the Pentagon Papers, a top secret study of America's involvement in Vietnam since 1945 that had been leaked to the paper by military analyst Daniel Ellsberg.

Also on this date:

In 1942, during World War II, a four-man Nazi sabotage team arrived by submarine on Long Island, New York, three days before a second four-man team landed in Florida. (All eight men were arrested within weeks, after two members of the first group defected.)

In 1966, the Supreme Court ruled in *Miranda v. Arizona* that criminal suspects had to be informed of their constitutional rights to remain silent and to consult an attorney.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Solicitor General Thurgood Marshall to become the first non-white justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1983, the U.S. space probe Pioneer 10, launched in 1972, became the first spacecraft to leave the solar system as it crossed the orbit of Neptune.

In 1996, the 81-day-old Freemen standoff in Montana ended as the 16 remaining members of the anti-government group left their ranch and surrendered to the FBI.

In 2000, the first meeting between leaders of North Korea and South Korea since the Korean War began as South Korean President Kim Dae-jung met North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il in Pyongyang.

In 2013, the White House said it had conclusive evidence that Syrian President Bashar Assad's government had used chemical weapons against opposition forces seeking to overthrow him.

In 2017, Otto Warmbier, a 22-year-old American college student, was released by North Korea in a coma and medically evacuated to the U.S. after 17 months in captivity, dying days later on June 19. The University of Virginia student had been accused of trying to steal a propaganda banner while visiting North Korea with a tour group and was convicted of subversion.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Malcolm McDowell is 83. Actor Stellan Skarsgård is 75. Actor Richard Thomas is 75. Former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Weaver is 75. Actor-comedian Tim Allen is 72. Actor Ally Sheedy is 64. Musician Rivers Cuomo (Weezer) is 56. Actor-comedian Steve-O is 52. Actor Ethan Embry is 48. Actor Chris Evans is 45. Actor Kat Dennings is 40. Fashion designers and former actors Ashley Olsen and Mary-Kate Olsen are 39. Actor Aaron Taylor-Johnson is 36. Actor Kodi Smit-McPhee is 30. Actor Daniella Perkins is 26. NHL hockey player Macklin Celebrini is 20.