

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, June 20

Groton Triathlon

Sr. Legion at Heritage Tournament, Milbank

U10 Baseball - Groton Tournament (ALL)

U12 Softball at Mobridge Tournament (ALL)

U10 Softball at Mobridge Tournament

Sunday, June 21

FATHER'S DAY

FIRST DAY OF SUMMER

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 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 with communion 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 Daily Independent

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

Sr. Legion at Heritage Tournament, Milbank

U12 Baseball - Groton Tournament

U14 Baseball: Hosts Clark, 4:00

Monday, June 22

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread, sherbet.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck at noon

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Rumble in the Jungle Boys Basketball Team Camp, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Arena/Gym

Jr. Legion at Sisseton, 5:30 p.m.

U12 Softball hosts Clark, DH, 6 p.m., (B&G)

U10 Softball hosts Clark, DH, 6 p.m., (W&G)

T-Ball girls at Brentford, 6 p.m.

T-Ball boys at Brentford, 7 p.m.

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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.

Dragon Boats Return

Communities across China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan celebrated the Dragon Boat Festival yesterday as competing teams paddled colorful, long dragon-shaped boats through rivers and harbors before crowds of spectators.

The holiday dates back more than 2,000 years; it's traditionally linked to a poet and government official named Qu Yuan, who, according to legend, drowned himself in China's Miluo River after his kingdom of Chu fell to the rival state of Qin. Villagers raced out in boats to search for him and tossed rice into the river to protect his body from fish, inspiring today's races and the festival food zongzi, a sticky rice dumpling wrapped in leaves.

Dragon boats can stretch more than 40 feet long and require crews of up to 20 people paddling in sync to the beat of a drum. The dragon symbolizes power and good fortune in Chinese culture.

Fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon delays US-Iran talks.

Israel and Hezbollah have reportedly reached a ceasefire agreement after deadly clashes led the US and Iranian officials to postpone talks in Switzerland yesterday. A peace deal signed by the US and Iran earlier this week is contingent on an end to fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. As of this writing, it is unclear whether the US and Iran will reschedule the talks.

UK special election could challenge Starmer's leadership.

Andy Burnham won a parliamentary seat yesterday, positioning the former mayor of Greater Manchester as a potential challenger to Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Roughly 52% of Britons say Starmer should step down, and Burnham is the preferred replacement, per recent polling. In Britain, the governing party can replace its leader with another member of parliament without holding a general election.

US wins its second World Cup match against Australia.

The win guarantees the US Men's National team a top-two finish in their four-team World Cup group and a spot in the Round of 32. The team's last group stage match is against Turkey on Thursday at 10 pm ET in California. The Round of 32, which is a single-elimination stage, begins Sunday, June 28, and runs through July 3.

Amazon drops nearly finished Sam Altman biopic after OpenAI deal.

Amazon MGM Studios yesterday confirmed it is abandoning the film project, led by Italian filmmaker Luca Guadagnino and starring "Spider-Man" star Andrew Garfield as the OpenAI CEO. The move comes months after Amazon and OpenAI struck a roughly \$50B partnership. The filmmakers are now seeking a new studio.

Greece's ancient Parthenon unveils biggest facelift in 220 years.

The monument's western face looks more complete, thanks to newly installed marble blocks. The milestone is part of a decades-long effort to repair centuries of damage from war, weather, and looting. The Parthenon was built nearly 2,500 years ago atop Athens' Acropolis as a temple to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, and drew about 4.6 million visitors last year.

Summer solstice marks the longest day of the year in the US.

Tomorrow will be the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the shortest in the Southern Hemisphere. The Earth's axis will be tilted such that the sun appears at its highest point in the sky in the Northern Hemisphere. After Sunday, daylight hours across North America, Europe, and much of Asia and Africa will gradually decrease until late December.

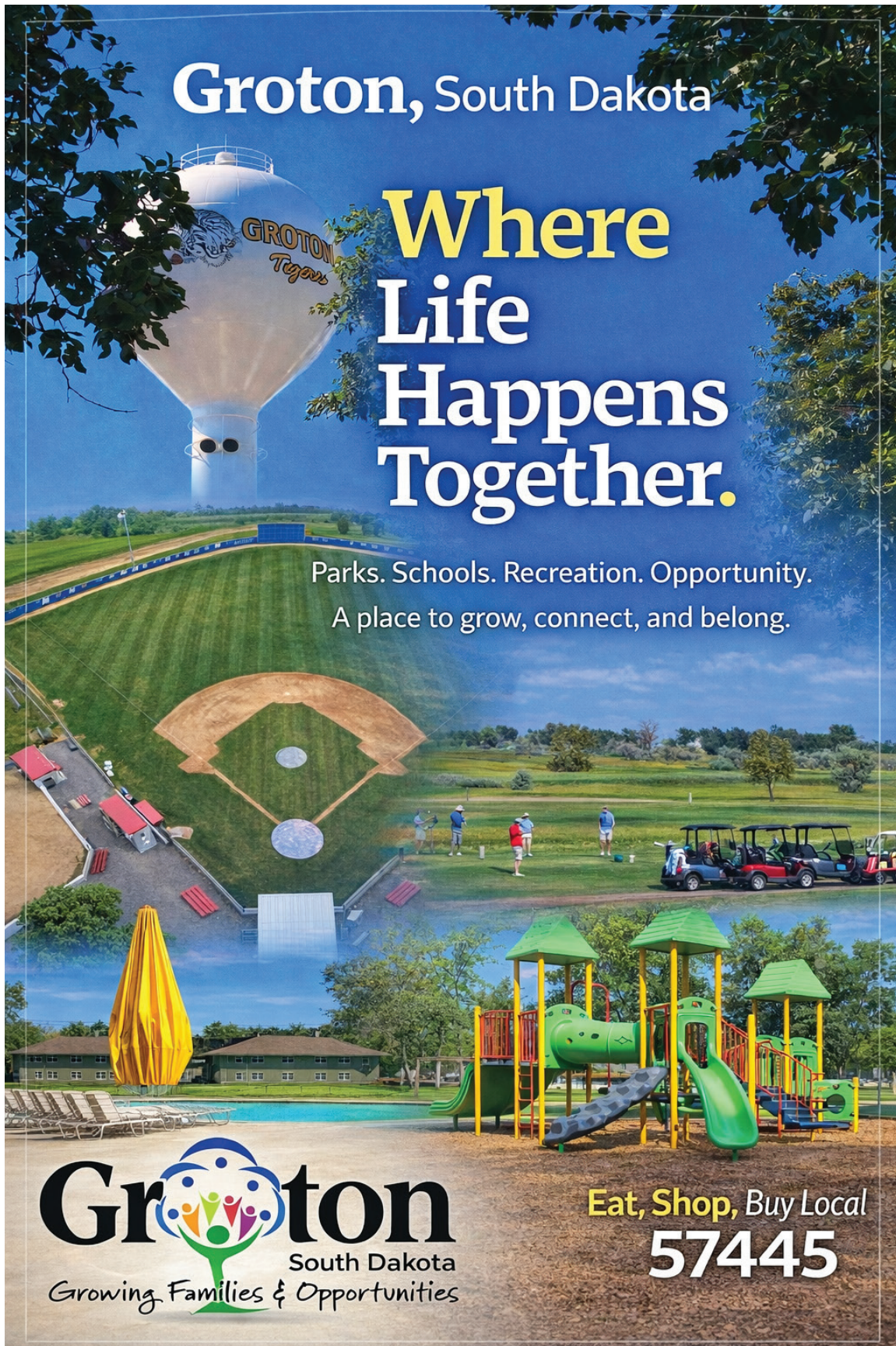
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Groton, South Dakota

Where
Life
Happens
Together.

Parks. Schools. Recreation. Opportunity.
A place to grow, connect, and belong.



Groton
South Dakota
Growing Families & Opportunities

Eat, Shop, Buy Local
57445

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Groton baseball teams experience mixed results Friday

Groton's baseball programs experienced a full slate of action Friday, with the Junior Legion, Senior Legion and 14U squads all taking the field. While the Senior Legion earned an impressive shutout victory, the Junior Legion and 14U teams came up short despite several strong individual performances.

The Groton Post 39 Junior Legion dropped a 7-4 decision to Volga despite outhitting the hosts 11-6. Groton appeared to be in control early, building a 4-0 lead through two innings.

Jordan Schwan sparked the offense with a triple in the first inning before scoring on a wild pitch. Lincoln Shilhanek added an RBI single in the frame, and Schwan later launched a solo home run to center field in the second inning.

Volga slowly chipped away and tied the game in the fourth inning before taking the lead for good in the sixth. Cooper Teske delivered the go-ahead RBI single and Damon Uecker followed with another run-scoring hit as Volga pulled away.

Schwan paced Groton offensively, going 2-for-3 with two RBIs, while Braden Fliehs, T.C. Schuster, Schwan and Shilhanek each recorded two hits. Alex Abeln started on the mound and allowed just one hit over two scoreless innings. Schwan took the loss in relief.

The Senior Legion squad enjoyed a much better outcome, blanking Castlewood Post 250 by an 8-0 score.

Schwan continued his hot day at the plate, collecting three hits, including a first-inning inside-the-park home run. He added a single and triple later in the game to finish 3-for-4.

Gavin Englund was dominant on the mound, allowing four hits over 5 2/3 scoreless innings while striking out eight. T.C. Schuster came on in relief to finish off the shutout.

Groton pounded out 12 hits in the victory. Englund, Schwan and Carter Simon each collected three hits. Simon also stole two bases as Groton swiped four bags overall. Defensively, Post 39 played error-free baseball and turned a double play.

The 14U team endured a difficult twinbill at Sisseton, falling 16-10 in the opener and 13-3 in the nightcap.

In the first game, Groton's offense exploded early, building a 6-0 lead and later reclaiming a 10-7 advantage in the third inning before Sisseton rallied.

Keegan Kucker turned in a huge performance, going 3-for-4 with a double, triple and single. Easton Larson also collected three hits, while Mason Locke added two hits.

Groton scored six runs over the first two innings and pushed four more across in the third. Asher Zimmerman delivered key RBI hits, Kucker drove in runs with extra-base hits, and Larson continued to produce throughout the lineup.

Sisseton answered with seven runs in the second inning and eventually regained the lead in the third before adding five insurance runs in the sixth. Groton finished with 12 hits and stole eight bases. Kucker and Larson each recorded three-hit games, while Zimmerman and Bentley Ehresmann each stole multiple bases.

The second game got off to a disastrous start for Groton as Sisseton erupted for 11 first-inning runs on just three hits, aided by several walks and hit batters.

Despite the early deficit, Groton struck first when Owen Tewksbury doubled home a run in the top of the first. Tewksbury later finished with two RBIs. Asher Zimmerman, Rylan Blackwood, Kyson Kucker and Tewksbury each collected a hit for Groton.

Kyson Kucker started on the mound for Post 39, while the defense played a clean game without committing an error. However, the early Sisseton outburst proved too much to overcome as Sisseton completed the sweep with a 13-3 victory.

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Ride 605 Exceeds Expectations!

The final numbers are in, and thanks to the incredible generosity of Legion Family members, local businesses, communities, and supporters across South Dakota, the 2026 Ride 605 raised an amazing \$22,832 for the South Dakota American Legion Foundation!

Our goal was \$10,000. Together, we more than doubled that goal and demonstrated what can be accomplished when people come together in support of a great cause.

One hundred percent of every dollar donated through Ride 605 is deposited directly into the South Dakota American Legion Foundation. These funds help support programs that serve our veterans, military families, children, and youth throughout South Dakota.

This year's ride celebrated America's 250th Anniversary while traveling across our state, visiting American Legion Posts, meeting community members, and honoring those who have served our nation. The generosity shown at every stop was truly inspiring.



LIVE MUSIC
AT THE LEGION!

LIZZY
HOFER

PLAYING
FRIDAY
JUNE 26

9 P.M. TO 1 A.M.
★
GROTON
AMERICAN LEGION

GREAT MUSIC ★ COLD DRINKS ★ GOOD TIMES
= EVERYONE WELCOME! =



for Ida Hannon's 90th Birthday

Ida will be turning 90 on July 7th! While a party isn't possible this year, we still want to make her day extra memorable. We'd like for her dearest friends and family (that's you!) to send her a card or gift this year. Include a message, old memories, photos, or simply birthday wishes.

Help us make her day one that she won't forget.

We will gather the cards and gifts for her to have on her big day.

please mail your card/gifts to:

Ida hannon (granddaughter
Michelle)

1208 appollo ave
Aberdeen SD, 57401
by July 11th

*thank you
for making this day extra special for my
grandma.*



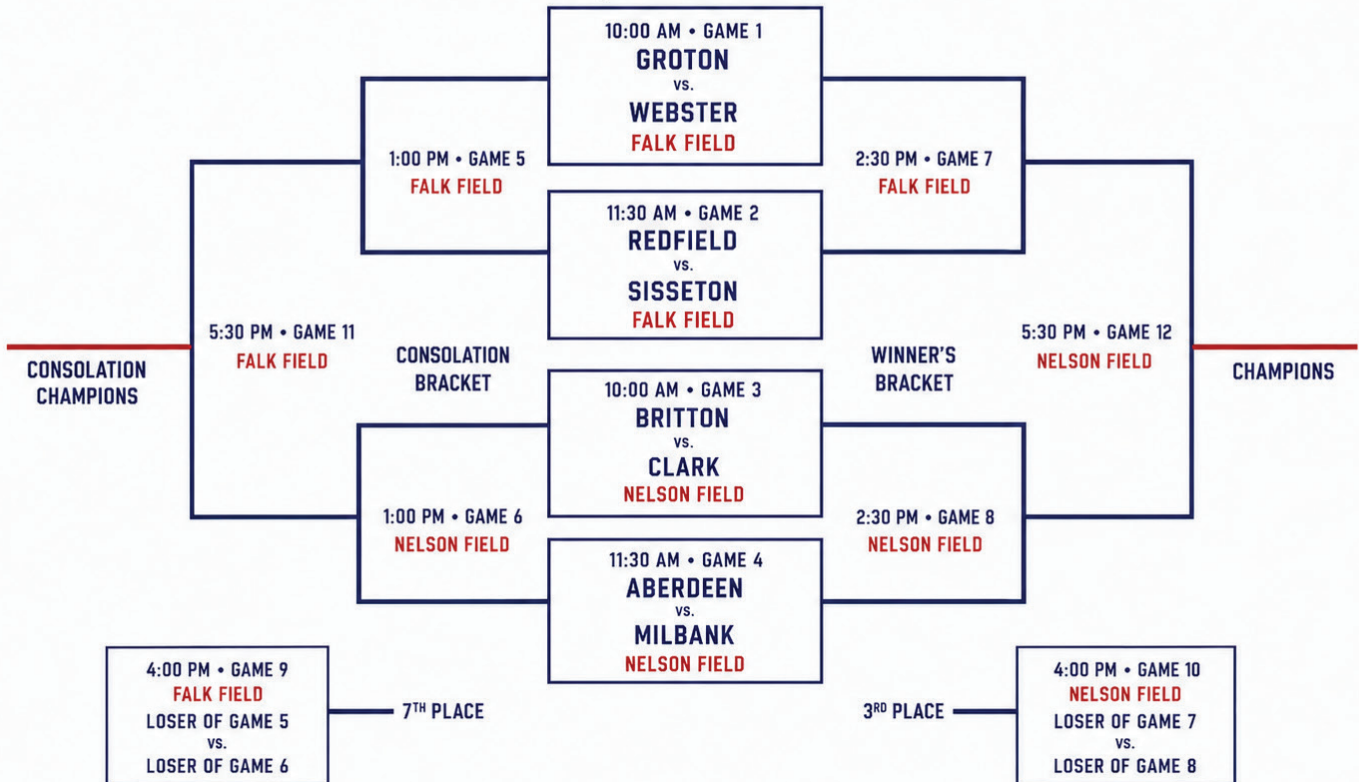
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★ U10 BASEBALL ★

8 TEAM CONSOLATION TOURNAMENT

— SATURDAY, JUNE 20 ★ GROTON —



★ ★ ★ GOOD SPORTS. GREAT TEAMS. LASTING MEMORIES. ★ ★ ★



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

We should transform a state watching the technology race to a state where the race is won

by Jordan Lamb

America is in a race, one that will define global economic leadership for the next decade. China is aggressively positioning itself as a center for artificial intelligence development and deployment. The winner will capture enormous competitive advantages in innovation, job creation and geopolitical influence. But there's a detail often overlooked in this high-stakes competition. None of it happens without reliable critical infrastructure, such as power and data centers.

Winning the AI race is fundamentally about establishing the critical infrastructure that powers innovation. AI systems rely on data centers, and data centers require electricity. If the United States intends to remain competitive, we must be able to build and power that infrastructure efficiently and affordably. That requires thoughtful policy, modernized permitting and a clear commitment to growth.

Data centers are not secondary to the tech economy. They are the foundation. The nation that builds and controls the most advanced, reliable and affordable data center infrastructure will lead in AI development and deployment.

Here in South Dakota, we have the essential components to build this critical infrastructure. Our affordable energy, vast land and strong workforce create the necessary conditions for establishing data center facilities that can compete globally. Tech employment in our state has grown 17% in recent years, outpacing many parts of the country. This is a signal that South Dakota can support and sustain the specialized environment required for advanced infrastructure development.

But having these advantages is not enough. The window of opportunity is finite, and other states are mobilizing their own competitive advantages. If we want South Dakota to be where America builds the critical infrastructure that powers the AI future, we must act decisively. Supporting and enabling this infrastructure development is not a favor to industry. It is imperative for our state and our nation.

Establishing critical data center infrastructure in South Dakota delivers immediate and long-term benefits for our communities. The Big Watt data center in Sully County alone contributes roughly \$900,000 a year in kilowatt-hour taxes directly to local schools and could eventually provide more than \$160 million annually as future phases come online. Its payroll already totals several million dollars a year, with nearly all staff drawn from within the region. This kind of investment can strengthen schools, support local businesses and create lasting economic opportunity.

Additionally, construction and development of this infrastructure alone can support hundreds of electricians, contractors, engineers and skilled trades workers. These are good-paying jobs that circulate dollars



A portion of a data center owned by Big Watt Digital north of Pierre, pictured on Dec. 23, 2025.

(Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

through local businesses. For rural parts of our state, that kind of investment can be transformative.

At Oahe Electric Cooperative, we see how thoughtful planning and load growth can support grid upgrades while protecting affordability for the families and small businesses we serve. We also know South Dakota is already a leader in renewable energy, with 29 wind projects totaling 3,476 megawatts, along with growing solar capacity and grid storage resources.

As demand for electricity grows, we are taking on new generation responsibly through an all-of-the-above energy strategy that rests on a reliable foundation of natural gas and coal, accompanied by wind and solar resources. Just as importantly, data centers should be required to pay the upfront costs associated with their onboarding so existing consumers are not left subsidizing the infrastructure needed to support large-scale new load. When planned responsibly, this approach can support grid upgrades and new generation in ways that maintain reliability and protect affordability for South Dakota's households and small businesses.

The broader significance is strategic. By establishing critical infrastructure for the technology economy, South Dakota positions itself as essential to American competitiveness. We attract complementary investment, develop specialized workforce expertise and build advantages that strengthen our state's position in the global economy for decades. If our policies create uncertainty or make infrastructure development financially unworkable, capital will flow to other states where the path is clearer and the commitment is stronger. We must transform from a state watching the technology race to a state where the race is won.

Our state must act now to establish the critical infrastructure that will power American innovation for the next decade. This is our moment to position South Dakota as essential to winning the technology race. With practical regulations and a clear commitment to supporting data center infrastructure development, we can ensure that South Dakota is where America builds the advanced infrastructure that leads the world in artificial intelligence. The technology shaping the global economy will be powered by the infrastructure we build today. South Dakota can be that foundation.

Jordan Lamb is CEO of Oahe Electric Cooperative in Blunt, South Dakota.

When teens drive less, they don't register to vote. Here's how civic groups are adapting.

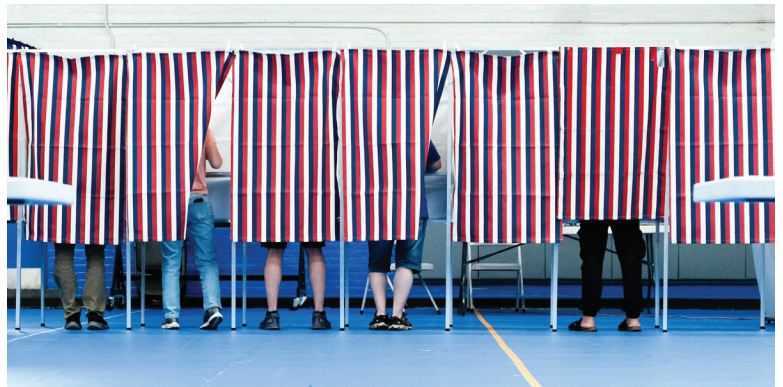
BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

American teens are driving less than in previous decades, prompting civic advocates to warn that fewer young people may register to vote.

Yet at least one state — New Hampshire — offers insight into how civic groups can work around a lack of registration opportunities to ensure young people can register, as well as the challenges that remain.

Since Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act in 1993, nearly all states must allow residents to register to vote at motor vehicle offices. But fewer teens are obtaining driver's licenses today, translating into fewer trips to the local Department of Motor Vehicles and more missed chances to register.

More than 7.5 million people ages 16 to 18 don't have a driver's license, according to data compiled by The Civics Center, a nonpartisan group focused on boosting youth voter registration. Three million of those youth will be old enough to vote this year and all will be eligible by 2028, the



Open Democracy, a New Hampshire voting rights group, has spent several years working to improve the registration rate among 18-year-olds. Shown are New Hampshire voters. (Photo by Will Steinfeld/

New Hampshire Bulletin)

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organization said in a June research report on how declines in teen driving, spurred in part by the rising cost of obtaining a license, could affect voting.

Young people represent a large pool of potential voters for candidates ahead of the midterm elections this November and the presidential election in 2028. Still, voting advocates worry barriers to registration will keep many of them from the polls.

"Our goal is to help people debunk these myths that it's somehow young people's fault that these systems aren't working well for them," said Laura Brill, founder and CEO of The Civics Center.

Low registration rates

In recent years about 60% of 18-year-olds have held driver's licenses, according to the Federal Highway Administration. By contrast, in 1994, the year after the National Voter Registration Act was passed, about 74% had licenses.

Even without declining visits to the DMV, registration rates among the youngest voters are low. During midterm election years, the percentage of 18-year-olds registered to vote typically remains under 30%, according to The Civics Center, compared to about 75% of Americans 45 and older.

Some civic groups are pushing for more in-person voter registration drives, including in high schools, which may help offset the effects of fewer trips to the DMV. Without significant action, they fear registration rates will dip even lower.

The League of Women Voters announced a partnership with The Civics Center in April to promote high school voter registration. The groups are offering state-specific training and toolkits to help members of the League, which has hundreds of chapters across the country, help students, teachers and school administrators hold registration drives.

They also want states to provide teens more time to register before they can vote. About half of teens currently live in states that allow voter pre-registration at 16 or earlier, according to The Civics Center.

These states include California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Virginia and Washington.

"Young people have a very short window of opportunity," said Jeanette Senecal, chief of civic learning and impact at the League of Women Voters. "So when we increase that window of opportunity to allow for preregistration at 16 and 17, there's a much longer kind of runway in order for us to get them registered to vote for that first election."

The focus on voter registration drives reflects, in part, an acknowledgement that online voter registration isn't a panacea for fewer in-person DMV visits. Thirty-six states either offer no online voter registration option or allow voter registration only with a driver's license or state-issued identification, according to information compiled by The Civics Center.

"Paper forms, typically you only need a Social Security number and not a driver's license. That's one of the reasons that in-person efforts can be so effective," Brill said.

SAVE America Act

Voter registration drives are under threat, however. President Donald Trump's signature election legislation, the SAVE America Act, would effectively prohibit drives held by third-party organizations like the League of Women Voters because it would require individuals to present documents proving their citizenship, such as a passport or birth certificate, to government officials in person to register to vote.

The bill has stalled in the U.S. Senate amid opposition from Democrats and a handful of Republican senators. Trump is still urging lawmakers to pass the measure and posted on social media recently that he opposes unrelated foreign surveillance legislation unless it also includes the SAVE America Act.

As of late 2024, 24 states and the District of Columbia placed no restrictions on third-party voter registration drives, according to the Movement Advancement Project, a Colorado-based think tank. An additional 24 states impose some limits, while Wyoming and New Hampshire prohibit them.

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What worked in New Hampshire

Because of its voter laws in the early 1990s, New Hampshire is one of six states exempt from the National Voter Registration Act, or NVRA, along with Idaho, Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The exemption means New Hampshire isn't required to offer voter registration at motor vehicle offices.

In New Hampshire, everyone — teens and older adults alike — registers in person with election officials and can also register at the polls on Election Day.

Open Democracy, a New Hampshire voting rights group, has spent several years working to improve the registration rate among 18-year-olds.

The organization hired an employee focused on high school voter registration and held 41 high school voter registration drives in 2024, said Olivia Zink, the group's executive director. To hold the drives, it had to assure election officials were present to accept paperwork.

In December 2023, an election off year, just 9% of New Hampshire 18-year-olds were registered. After the November 2024 election, nearly 64% of 18-year-olds were registered, according to data compiled by The Civics Center. Zink acknowledged that the presidential election was a major motivator, but she emphasized the importance of registering students every year.

State laws can play a major role. Registrations plummeted last year, Zink said, after state lawmakers removed the ability of residents to sign an affidavit as proof of citizenship. She attributed the drop to students not regularly carrying their birth certificates or other documents proving citizenship with them.

"Even with education and posters that are hung up at school and announcements and letters home to parents — we still saw so many fewer students register to vote in 2025 due to that law," Zink said.

In May, a federal judge blocked the New Hampshire law after a coalition of voting rights groups, including Open Democracy, challenged the measure.

As part of her decision, Judge Samantha Elliott, a Biden appointee, found that Open Democracy registered fewer students in 2025 compared to 2023, even though the organization at that time didn't have a full-time staff member dedicated to high school registration.

Zink said that even in the first few weeks since the judge's decision, she had heard of high school students once again registering by signing affidavits.

Despite persistent barriers, Senecal cast the work of registering young people as critical. Each time someone votes, they're more likely to vote again, she said.

"So the earlier we can engage those people, we really help create these lifetime habits of voting," Senecal said.

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

Podcast: After legislative turnover, lobbyist hopes to 'make state government boring again'

Leader of retailers association says pendulum is swinging from 'populist' back to 'traditional' Republicans

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN



Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association, participates in an election forum on Sept. 19, 2024, at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

SANDERSON: The dichotomy is a philosophy of governance, and what seems to be the case right now, and you don't want to jump to too great a conclusion, but what seems to be the case as a result of the 2026 Republican primary is more of a return to traditional governance, as I kind of like to say, let's make state government boring again, right?

O'BRIEN: We're back with another episode of Searchlight Report – the 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. It wasn't just the race for the Republican nomination for governor that created a stir during the primary election two weeks ago. Voters also ousted 16 incumbents from the Legislature, echoing a similar shakeup from 2024. Back then, concerns arose about an Iowa company that was trying to run a carbon capture pipeline through farm and ranch land

using the legal power of eminent domain. That's the ability to take private property for public use, with compensation to the landowner. Many of the new legislators who won seats in 2024 opposed the project. They ended up passing a law banning eminent domain for carbon pipelines. For insight about the causes of this year's upheaval, I sat down recently with Nathan Sanderson, who spends his winters lobbying lawmakers. He's the executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association, representing four thousand businesses across the state.

SANDERSON: formerly served as the director of policy and operations for Governor Dennis Daugaard, overseeing eight state departments. Before that, he worked as the director of policy for the state's Department of Agriculture, and taught at the University of Nebraska.

O'BRIEN: So, help set the scene for me. Two years ago, 14 legislators who were incumbents lost their seats in that year's primary election. What do you think brought about that change, and how did that shift affect the Legislature then?

SANDERSON: I think that there were a lot of factors involved with that in '24, but the most overriding factor I think was turnout of Republican voters in the primary. You know, if you look back to the primaries in the immediate two or three years before that, 2022, 2020, 2018, turnout for Republicans was nearly 40%. And in that particular election, I'm working off of memory, I think it was 25% amongst Republicans. It was considerably less, and then what we saw here in 2026 is more of a return to normal, just a little bit over 40% of Republicans turned out to vote, and so at a high level, I think that was the tale of the tape.

O'BRIEN: And how did you see that change then, with so many incumbents losing their seats? How did that impact the next two years of legislative sessions?

SANDERSON: Well, over the last number of years, call it the last six or so years, the leadership vote, particularly in the House, was quite close. Meaning, the body was pretty well divided between what you

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might call traditional Republicans and populist Republicans. In the '24 election cycle that really kind of switched, where there were a few more populist Republicans than traditional Republicans, and so you saw a turnover in legislative leadership there, and I think at a high level that's really the most significant impact. I mean, yes, there were individual bills introduced, yes, there were votes on other bills that were different, but from a management of the Legislature perspective, who's in leadership is tremendously important. They're the ones who determine which committees receive which bills, they're the ones who determine which legislators sit on certain committees, they're the ones who determine who chairs certain committees, and so that change in the leadership dynamic was, I think, the overriding impact of the 2024 election.

O'BRIEN: And so now we've seen another major turnover. There's 16 incumbents who lost their seats in this past week's primary election. What do those losses mean? And what was the difference, or what was kind of similar, for those reasons for those losses?

SANDERSON: Well, we could talk about this for quite a long time. So, I think that the first thing that took place as a result of this election was there's a decided shift back more towards traditional Republicans in the Legislature. Meaning, not all, but a number of the incumbents who lost would associate more with the populist wing of the Republican Party. And so that is going to mean almost certainly a leadership change in both the House and the Senate, and so that will do all of the things that we just talked about, you know, provide new opportunities for committee composition and chairpeople of committees, and that kind of thing. So that's certainly one, you know, when we come back to why did this happen, I think that it really does come down to individual races, you know. We can throw out a couple of examples there, so let's say, like, go to John Carley's race out in District 29 for example. He had only been in for two years. He had moved to South Dakota within the relatively recent past, was one of the kind of COVID relocators to South Dakota, was elected for just one two-year term, and then now is out. And he's being replaced by Bill Meirose, again a Republican in that district, who is a longtime resident of Meade County. People call him Dr. Bill, he's a pastor. I mean, he would very clearly align with more of the traditional Republicans, and John Carley would align more with the populist Republicans. That is just a small microcosm of, I think, the change that took place, which was more of a reversion to about the split that you would expect to see in the Legislature between those traditional Republicans and then the populist Republicans. Also, one other thing worth noting, I mean, we still have a general election coming up, obviously, but I think even after the general election is over, the overall composition of the Legislature between Republicans and Democrats, I don't think is going to be demonstrably different. Currently, we've got 97 Republicans and eight Democrats. We're going to be somewhere in that kind of ballpark, I think, after the general election. We might have a few more here or there, but if there were more than, say, a dozen Democrats in the Legislature, I think that would be kind of a surprise.

O'BRIEN: OK, and you mentioned State Senator John Carley's race out in the Meade County area. What other legislative races in this primary did you see as kind of those key ones to look at?

SANDERSON: Well, we talked about Carley and 29, I guess it would also be worth noting District 29 is kind of a unique example in the history of South Dakota where all three of the incumbents in that district lost. And so, District 29 is going to have a complete turnover in their senator from John Carley to Bill Meirose, and then also in the House. And so Gary Cammack, who's a Republican, now going to be joining the House, most likely, he was a former Senate majority leader, had served in the Legislature for quite a long time, and Gary Deering, now, is going to be newly elected to the Legislature. I think my point is, in 29 all three of those seats turned over. If you look over East River up in Aberdeen, in District 3, it's a similar kind of situation. All three of the legislators in District 3, so that would be Carl Perry in the Senate, he lost to Katie Washnok, for example. Katie had run against him two years ago when that turnout was so low and lost. Now this time it was her second time on the ballot, she had a fair bit more name recognition, and she ended up winning that district by more than 1,000 votes, and so on the eastern side, that District 3 clean sweep is sort of reflective of what happened West River in District 29 with the clean sweep. This is a very unusual circumstance, and historically incumbents don't lose elections very often.

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You'll see a couple, maybe a handful, in any given election cycle, and so to see 16 incumbents turnover in 2026 is a very unusual situation.

O'BRIEN: Would you say that it's also unusual to have two, kind of, major shakeups happen within such close years?

SANDERSON: That's absolutely correct. I mean, again, as I mentioned, you talked about before, 14 incumbents lost in '24, very unusual at the time. Now to see that pendulum swing back with 16 incumbents lose, I think what this kind of says is we're in a period of volatility, politically. I don't think that that's going to come as a surprise to many people, and in South Dakota, of course, that political dichotomy isn't so much Republicans versus Democrats. I mean, yes, certainly, that exists, but because the Legislature is so heavily skewed toward Republicans — and is very clearly a more conservative body than the South Dakota electorate at large — what you've got is, you don't even really have two factions, you have three: you have those traditional Republicans, the populist Republicans, and Democrats. That makes the politics a little bit different than a lot of other states in the country, right?

O'BRIEN: And so with that split in the Republican Party, what kind of policies do you think maybe contributed to that split that we're seeing now?

SANDERSON: Well, I don't know that I necessarily think that it's always individual bills, you know, for example, in 2024 there was a lot of conversation about the carbon sequestration pipeline. And yes, there was some talk about an individual bill, Senate Bill 201, but I don't even know that it was necessarily the bill itself. It was more like a philosophy of, "Should we, as a state, have this kind of development, foster it, or should we have a kind of scenario where landowners have the say in what comes on their land or what doesn't?" That was sort of the philosophical debate that was out there. Similarly in 2026, I think that it's more of a philosophy of governance rather than any specific individual bills, meaning over the last couple of years, we saw a lot of social issues come to the fore. We talked about abortion a lot, we talked about in vitro fertilization, we talked about, you know, vaping, we talked about a whole variety of those kinds of things. We also talked about things like public education versus private education, and how should we fund those things. We talked a lot about property taxes, and whether we should offset property taxes with sales taxes, or should we reduce the sales tax on food, or should we reduce the overall sales tax, or we had this kind of tax policy schizophrenia over the last number of years. And so, yes, there are certainly specific bills, but I think broader, the dichotomy is a philosophy of governance, and what seems to be the case right now, and you don't want to jump to too great a conclusion, but what seems to be the case as a result of the 2026 Republican primary is more of a return to traditional governance, as I kind of like to say, let's make state government boring again, right?

O'BRIEN: And so, with these changes you'd mentioned, too, that we're anticipating probably some legislative leadership changes as well. Are there any other repercussions that you're expecting to see out of this new kind of turnover?

SANDERSON: Well, we're a little bit early, I think, to say, because we've got one key outstanding question that's still lingering, and I'm not even talking about the general election, and that is, of course, who the governor is going to be. You know, when you're looking at policymaking in South Dakota, there are three primary components: you've got the House, you've got the Senate, and you've got the governor, right? Any two of those three can sort of impose their will on the third, meaning if the House and the Senate agree to a significant extent, they can pass any legislation they want even over a gubernatorial veto, you know, if there's two-thirds in both the House and the Senate. Similarly, if the Senate and the governor agree on, say, a specific policy or the budget, or that kind of thing, they can very often hold sway over the House, not always. And the same thing, if the House and the governor get together, they can often hold sway over the Senate, and so because we don't know yet whether it's going to be Larry Rhoden or Toby Doeden who wins the Republican nomination, and we also don't know what the outcome of the general election is going to be, it's a little bit difficult to look into our crystal ball just yet and say, "Here are the policies that we're likely to see." The other thing that I think that is really outstanding and maybe undergirding all of this is what is the nature of the state budget going to be. That's always the top thing that the Legislature needs to do, and when we talk about philosophy of governance, one good

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example of that is this last year we had a number, and I'm working off a memory, it's close to 20, maybe 18 legislators between the House and the Senate who voted against the general appropriations bill. They voted against the budget. Well, this is the one constitutionally required thing that we do, is we balance the budget, right? And so, yes, they're taking these symbolic votes, I'd have to go back and look, but a good share of the folks that voted against the state budget this spring lost in the primary election, and I think that is just sort of another example of the return to normal order, I think that the voters demonstrated in the Republican primary.

O'BRIEN: Right, I want to go back to the primary for governor. How did you see that race impacting these legislative races?

SANDERSON: Well, it was certainly clear that Dusty Johnson and his group had played an active role in recruiting and supporting some of the candidates for the Legislature. There were other groups that had nothing to do with the Johnson campaign, who were also interested in sort of restoring more traditional Republicans to the Legislature. I think that those efforts were very concerted, they were deliberate, they were well funded, and I think the results kind of speak to the fact that they were successful in those endeavors. Outside of that, I mean, it also seems clear that there's a little bit of a disconnect between the legislative outcome and the gubernatorial primary outcome, meaning most of the folks who won in the Legislature probably aren't going to be aligned with, say, a Toby Doeden agenda. And I think that it would be very clear that should Toby Doeden eventually become governor, he would be facing a Legislature that was not particularly aligned with the rhetoric that he's used to this point in the campaign, so that could be an interesting outcome. I also think, though, that that apparent dichotomy is simply a product of the way that the Republican primary, or the primary elections for governor, work, meaning you had a four-way race, and it was generally pretty split. I mean, when the lowest vote getter gets 21% and the highest vote getter gets 31%, you know that's pretty well, the votes are pretty well spread across the board, and so it will be interesting to see what happens in the primary, where Toby Doeden didn't receive more than 50% of the Republican vote in any county. So, meaning the three sort of more, the ones with government experience versus the one guy who had no government experience, between those three, Larry Rhoden, Dusty Johnson, and Jon Hansen, they got 69% of the vote, and he got 31. And so with Toby not winning more than 50% in any one county, I don't know that you could necessarily say, oh yeah, there's this huge disconnect between the gubernatorial vote and the legislative vote. I think what will be interesting is the outcome of the runoff, of course, between Larry Rhoden and Toby Doeden.

O'BRIEN: Absolutely, and you mentioned, too, if Toby Doeden were to take the primary, win in the general, he would be coming into a sort of hostile legislative environment as well.

SANDERSON: Well, I think a lot of the legislators who were elected in this Republican primary have experience, or who would, as I mentioned, align themselves with the traditional Republicans. And so to use just one example, Toby Doeden has said a number of times that he's going to eliminate property taxes. Well, property taxes in South Dakota raise about \$2 billion and all of those dollars go to support local units of government, your local school districts, your county, your municipality, your ambulance district, and your fire district, and your water district, and all those kinds of things. That money does not come to Pierre. Well, so you can't just wipe away \$2 billion and not fund the roads in your counties, or you know, the sewers in your cities, or whatever. You have to fund some of these things, and so I think that the Legislature, the composition of it, when they convene in January '27, they largely recognize these realities, and those realities, yeah, are a little bit at odds to the rhetoric that we've heard from Toby Doeden.

O'BRIEN: OK, and so property tax, obviously one of the bigger conversations of the legislative session, so was data center legislation. What kind of big topics do you see maybe carrying over into this next year here?

SANDERSON: Well, I think that the property tax conversation is largely done. I mean, there's always something to do on property taxes, but you know, we had three legislative summer studies on this topic over the last five years, and so I think people have largely said it's now time to take these changes that have been made and let's see how they will work themselves out. I mean, one of the things that never

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got spoken about during the primary for governor was that none of these changes are going to actually go into effect practically until 2028 because we're not changing the sales tax until next June. You know, we're not going to see the dollars that would offset the property taxes for '27 for a while. So, you've got to wait basically a year and a half from now, and so I think that there's going to be an appetite to just kind of let some of those things set. You know, we are going to have to see what the budget looks like, and so how are we going to fund our schools I think is going to be a big topic of conversation. We're going to have to see just generally what the budget looks like. I mean, the economy right now is a little bit, it's sort of consistent, steady, maybe even, but a little soft. Meaning, we've got the controversy in Iran and the war that's going on there, which has increased fertilizer prices. You know, we've got this screwworm situation that's impacting cattle, and so is that going to drive cattle prices up? Who knows? You know, the price of corn and soybeans isn't particularly good, and so the ag economy is going to be a little bit disjointed, and as we know from our retail businesses across South Dakota, when ag does well, our economy does well, and our retail businesses do well. And so that I think is going to be a really big topic of things. I'm hopeful that we will see less on the social issue front when we come in January. Just on a personal level, I think that that's a little bit outside of what the scope of government should be. And I think, historically, South Dakota has taken a little bit of a hands-off approach towards social issues and sort of acknowledged that we're a free state, and you know, let people sort of behave in a free fashion, but we'll have to see what comes in January on that front.

O'BRIEN: And then also looking at some of the losses, and also some of the members not running, the Freedom Caucus looks like it'll only have one person left to be representing them, Representative Phil Jenson out of Rapid City, he's a Republican, returning from that public list of members. Can you explain what the Freedom Caucus is for people who don't know, and how the departure of so many of its members will affect the Legislature?

SANDERSON: Well, that's an outstanding question, because what the Freedom Caucus is in South Dakota is a little bit of an unknown. It's a relatively small group of folks. I think that there were nine publicly identified members prior to this primary, and as you noted, I think there's just one left. To the extent that it continues to exist, I think that there were a few new legislators who could be aligned with that faction. Honestly, in the Legislature, that group of folks has not played a significant role in policymaking. It's been nine out of the entire Legislature, you know, that's not even 10%. They have, yes, met sort of separately by definition, they've caucused a little bit different, but they've also caucused with the Republicans as well, in both the House and the Senate. And so I think what it has been has been mostly a mouthpiece to sort of project a particular view that that relatively small group of people has.

O'BRIEN: And how do you think campaign financing played a role in this year's legislative race? I know that the South Dakota Retailers Association has their own political action committee. What issues did you guys focus on, and how do you think financing played a role?

SANDERSON: Well, so for better or for worse, political action committees are the way that you support candidates in the state. So, we've got about 4,000 members around the state. The Retailers Association puts dollars into a political action committee, so that we can then support legislative candidates who reflect our values. What are our values? We want low taxes, reasonable regulations in South Dakota to be a great place to do business. We want reasonable, thoughtful, common-sense legislators who are statesmen who put the good of the state above their own personal ideology. At a high level, those are the kinds of candidates that we support, and definitely in this primary, there were a number of political action committees, largely funded from South Dakotans, by the way, or by groups like ours, who represent South Dakota, whether it's businesses or bankers, or whether it's school teachers, or whomever, you know, a lot of these are South Dakota-based efforts, but there's no question that more of the traditional Republicans in the primary received the support from political action committees like ours than did the populist Republicans.

O'BRIEN: OK, I think that's all the questions that I have for you. Do you have anything that you want to mention that I didn't bring up at all?

SANDERSON: Well, I think that because South Dakota's Legislature turns over every two years, you

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know, we have elections, even our senators only serve two years, right? And so you see a lot of turnover in the Legislature, just naturally, you know, somewhere between about 30 to 40% of the body turns over in every single election, you know, so if you've got 105 legislators, you're looking at 35 people or something like that on average, that would be new in any given election cycle. And I think that in this particular election cycle, of course, depending on who the governor is, you're going to see a return to the more bland, the more mundane. I'm optimistic that we're going to not see state government have these big headlines and things, it's going to do what it's designed to do, which is provide the citizens of the state the things that they need, they need roads, they need services, they need the ability to go hunting and fishing, and you know those kinds of things, and to stay out of their business otherwise, and I think that largely this Legislature is going to reflect that traditional philosophy.

O'BRIEN: Though the Legislative primaries have already been decided, the race for the Republican nomination for governor continues and advance voting has already begun for the runoff election. Voter registration is open through July 13th. The special election is July 28th. To learn more about the candidates and the race, check out our past episodes with Governor Larry Rhoden and businessman Toby Doeden, and our episodes talking about the race with columnist Kevin Woster and political blogger Pat Powers.

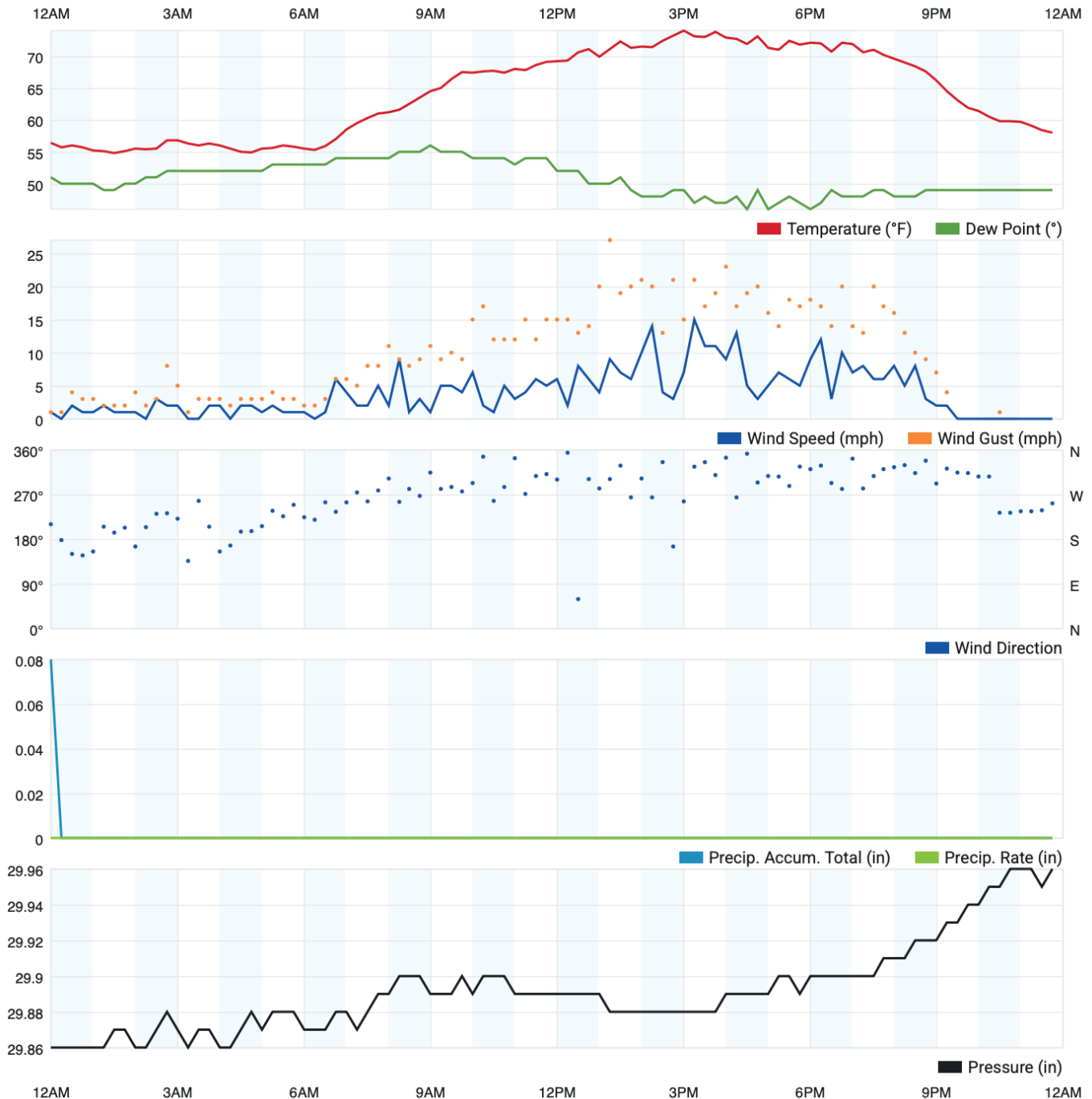
That's all we have for this episode of Searchlight Report. Audio for this episode of the podcast came from recordings by South Dakota Searchlight. The podcast is based on reporting by South Dakota Searchlight's staff — editor Seth Tupper, senior reporter John Hult and reporters Joshua Haiar, Makenzie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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 19, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

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Today



High: 76 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 53 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Sunday



High: 73 °F

Slight Chance
Showers

Sunday Night



Low: 51 °F

Slight Chance
Showers

Monday



High: 76 °F

Partly Sunny



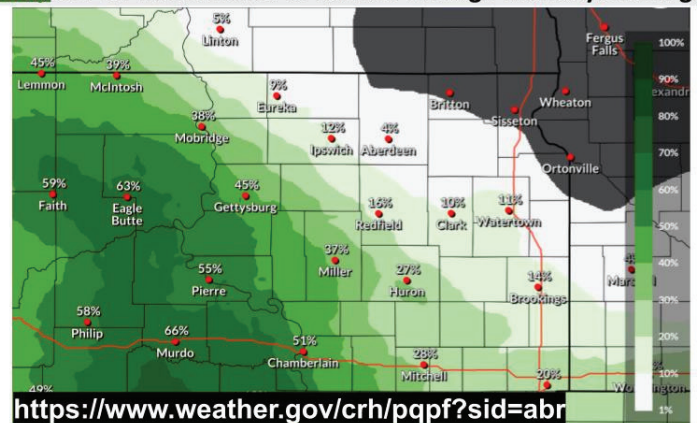
Percent Chance of 1 or More Inches of Rain

June 20, 2026
1:56 AM CDT

The Image Below Represents The Cumulative Probability of 1 or More Inches of Rainfall through Monday evening

Key Messages:

- Rain showers and occasional thunderstorms this weekend.
 - Chances start across south central South Dakota Saturday afternoon before gradually spreading into central and north central South Dakota on Sunday.
- Some areas could receive over an inch of rainfall by Monday morning!



<https://www.weather.gov/crh/pqpf?sid=abr>

Location	Low-End Amount	Expected Amount	High-End Amount	Chance of Seeing More Than									
				0.01"	0.1"	0.25"	0.5"	1"	2"	3"	4"	6"	8"
Gettysburg, SD	0.2"	0.9"	2.2"	100%	95%	88%	74%	45%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pierre, SD	0.5"	1.2"	2.1"	100%	99%	96%	90%	55%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Murdo, SD	0.6"	1.2"	2.4"	100%	100%	99%	93%	66%	18%	1%	0%	0%	0%



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Rain chances start across south central South Dakota by late this afternoon, gradually spreading into central and north central South Dakota tonight into Sunday. Portions of central and south central South Dakota could receive over an inch of rain by Monday morning.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 74 °F at 3:02 PM

Low Temp: 55 °F at 1:27 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 1:07 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1988

Record Low: 34 in 1969

Average High: 82

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in June.: 2.42

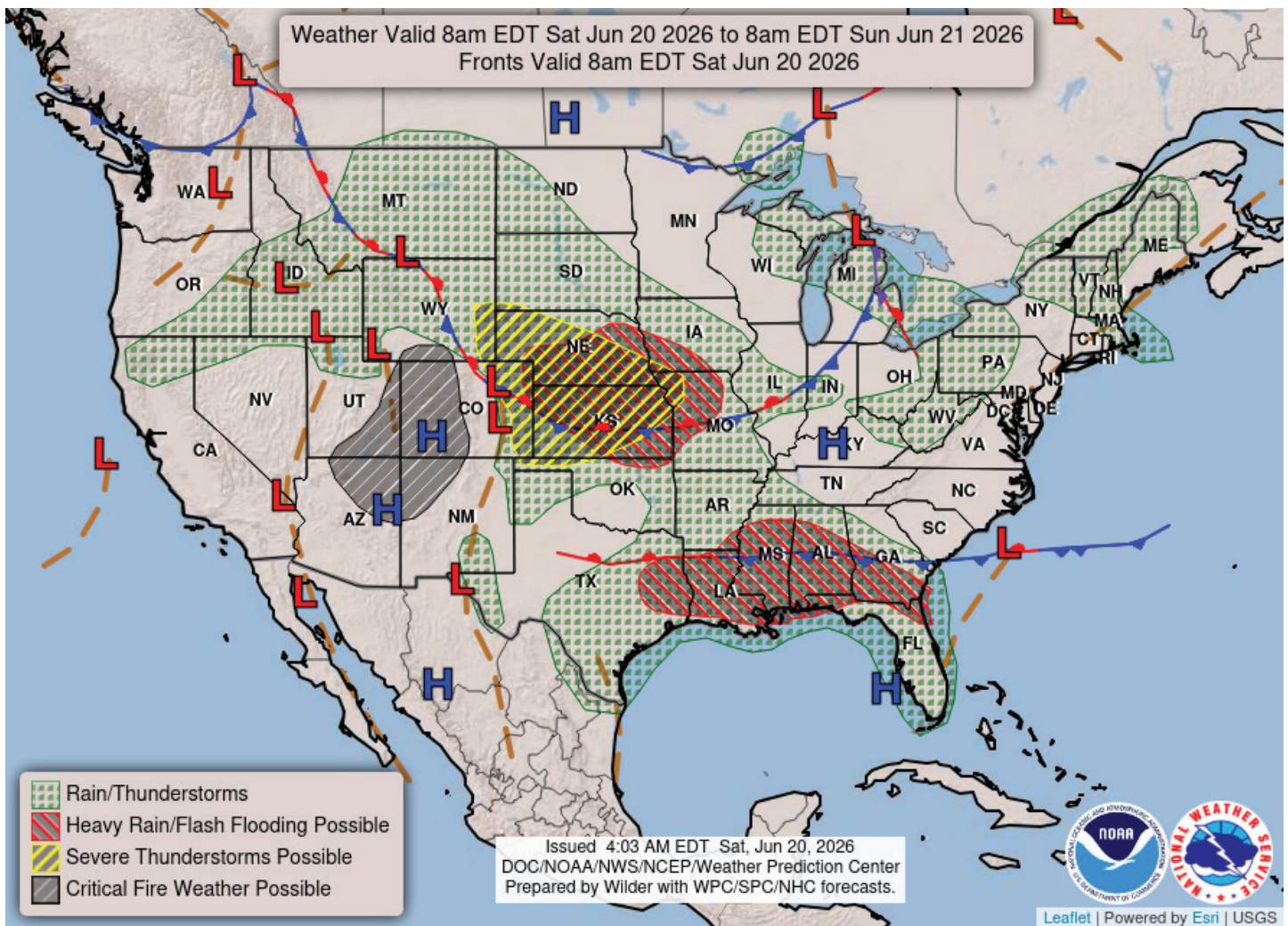
Precip to date in June.: 1.37

Average Precip to date: 9.67

Precip Year to Date: 8.13

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43 am



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Today in Weather History

June 20th, 1957: An F2 tornado moved ENE from near Rockham to near Athol and Ashton. The storm destroyed a mobile home near the start of the path, killing one person. Four barns were damaged, and one house was unroofed.

Also on this day, an F5 tornado cut a swath through Fargo, North Dakota, killing 10 and injuring at least 103 people. The tornado was the northernmost confirmed F5 until the Elie, Manitoba tornado on June 22nd, 2007.

June 20th, 1989: A meteorological "hot flash" hit Pierre. Descending air from collapsing thunderstorms caused the temperature to warm from 86 degrees at midnight to 96 at 1 a.m. and 104 at 2 a.m. Pierre's record high for the date was 105 degrees in 1974.

1682 — A major tornado ripped through southwestern Connecticut, passing through Stratford, Milford, and New Haven, and then into Long Island Sound. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1921 — Circle, MT, received 11.5 inches of rain in 24 hours, a record for the state. The town of Circle received a total of 16.79 inches of rain that month to establish a rainfall record for any town in Montana for any month of the year. (The Weather Channel)

1928 — A farmer near Greensburg, KS, looked up into the heart of a tornado. He described its walls as rotating clouds lit with constant flashes of lightning and a strong gassy odor with a screaming, hissing sound. (The Weather Channel)

1964 — A squall line producing large hail swept through central Illinois. A second squall line moved through during the early morning hours of the 21st, and a third one moved through shortly after dawn. The series of hailstorms caused nine million dollars damage. Hailstones as large as grapefruit caused heavy damage to trees, utility lines, crops and buildings. The thunderstorms also produced as much as five inches of rain in an eight hour period. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Thunderstorms prevailed east of the Rockies, producing severe weather in the Central High Plains Region. Thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes in Colorado, and produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Goodland, KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thirty-eight cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Flint, MI, and 104 degrees at Chicago, IL, equalled records for the month of June. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced baseball size hail near Kief, and wind gusts to 100 mph near McGregor. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — An early morning thunderstorm produced wind gusts to 61 mph at Pierre, SD, and the hot thunderstorm winds raised the temperature from 86 degrees at midnight to 96 degrees by 1 AM, and 104 degrees by 2 AM. Butte, MT, and Yellowstone Park, WY, reported snow that afternoon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Work Is a Ministry

**Through work, the Lord develops our character
and gives us the opportunity to love others.**

Ephesians 6:5-8: 5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Christians sometimes make the mistake of mentally separating their work life from their spiritual life. But this isn't a wise way to live. The Holy Spirit should be involved in everything we do, and no matter where we are, we should recognize Him as our guide, comforter, and intercessor.

The apostle Paul clearly teaches that work is to be done "as for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). Other people may do a job better because of greater skill or experience, but believers should be known for doing quality work in an honest, wise, and faithful manner. And we can trust the Holy Spirit to equip us to do just that.

Serving the Lord on the job means that our workplace is also our ministry. When done as unto the Lord, our jobs become more than a means to make a living. Work develops character, builds a sense of self-worth, and develops skills. Moreover, while we are around coworkers, we have an opportunity to build relationships, share our testimony, and glorify our heavenly Father.

Work gives us a chance to show God's love to others, and the reward for those who do so is greater than a paycheck. After all, they are blessed with a ministry—a harvest field for the kingdom—whether it's at a school, office building, construction site, warehouse, store, or elsewhere.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.19.26

2 20 28 51 54 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 11 Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.19.26

13 16 21 26 50 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$467,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

11 16 18 33 51 9

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$30,230,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 11 Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

8 11 12 25 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$140,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 26 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

10 17 44 63 67 24

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 55 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

3 26 49 53 61 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$302,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 55 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Fighting persists in Lebanon despite a ceasefire as the US-Iran deal is under threat

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

TYRE, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday killed at least seven people, including two children, hours after reports emerged of a ceasefire agreement. The persistent fighting threatened an interim agreement between the United States and Iran to end the war in the Middle East. Lebanon's National News Agency said the strikes hit the southern town of Nabatiyeh and nearby villages. At least seven people remained trapped under the rubble, it said.

Mediators were scrambling to halt the fighting between Israel and the militant Lebanese Hezbollah group, after a heavy exchange on Friday killed at least 47 people in Lebanon and four Israeli soldiers.

An Israeli military official said Hezbollah had fired more than 50 projectiles at Israeli forces in southern Lebanon overnight, prompting the military to start targeting the militant group there. The official spoke anonymously in line with regulations.

On Friday, Israeli ambassador to Washington, Yechiel Leiter, said on X that Israel "remains firmly committed to an immediate ceasefire" if Hezbollah honors the agreement and ceases hostilities.

In public statements, Hezbollah has said it will abide by a ceasefire if Israel does, but has not said a ceasefire was actually in place.

A Hezbollah official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said Friday after reports of a ceasefire deal emerged that efforts were underway by Qatar, the U.S. and Iran to broker an Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire but stopped short of confirming a deal had been reached.

A conflict that could sink the US-Iran deal

Hezbollah and Israel went to war just days after the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran on Feb. 28, with Hezbollah firing rockets and drones at civilian communities in northern Israel and Israel seizing large swaths of southern Lebanon.

The interim U.S.-Iran agreement signed this week has already reopened the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran had closed as the war unfolded — cutting off the global economy from significant supplies of oil and natural gas. The deal also envisages the relaunch of talks on Iran's nuclear program, a core issue in the war.

Neither Israel nor Hezbollah are signatories to the deal, which calls for a halt to military operations in Lebanon and for the country's sovereignty to be respected. With the fighting continuing, the accord is under threat and U.S.-Iran talks in Switzerland, planned to start Friday, have been delayed, with no new date announced.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep Israeli forces in southern Lebanon until any threat to Israel is eliminated. Hezbollah has refused to halt its attacks unless Israel commits to withdrawing from Lebanon, which Iran says is also a condition of the deal.

The fighting in the south, near the Israel-Lebanon border

A strike on the village of Barish killed four members of a family, parents and two children. In Arab Salim village, a body was pulled from a destroyed house, and in the villages of Doueir and Kfar Rumman, drone strikes killed a person on a motorcycle and a Lebanese soldier.

Plumes of smoke rose into the sky over southern Lebanon Saturday and Israeli jets flew low over the coastal city of Tyre.

The city's residents told The Associated Press they were relieved that Tyre had been spared in recent days but the sounds of Israeli planes reminded them the war is not over. Many doubted a ceasefire — even if agreed on — would hold.

"Our entire lives would change if there's a ceasefire," said Hussein Khoshman, a Tyre resident.

Netanyahu's office did not immediately comment on the ceasefire efforts. On Friday, Netanyahu posted on X that, on his orders, the Israeli army had "struck powerfully" 150 Hezbollah targets, killing dozens of

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militants.

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said the Israeli forces were operating in a "forward defense zone" and would continue doing so.

Iranian and US officials cancel travel to Switzerland

Iranian officials did not travel as planned to Switzerland, insisting that the fighting in Lebanon must stop before the talks can take place. U.S. Vice President JD Vance also postponed his trip.

On Saturday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told the semi-official ISNA news agency that Pakistan's interior minister will arrive in Iran as part of continued negotiation efforts. Baghaei had said earlier that consultations through mediators were ongoing regarding the next phase of negotiations to draft a final U.S.-Iran agreement.

Because the initial deal was signed digitally earlier this week, the talks in Switzerland were not urgent, and plans were underway to hold a meeting in the coming days, he said.

Much still needs to be resolved

The talks in Switzerland were expected to focus on Iran's nuclear program. Tehran maintains it's for peaceful purposes only, though it has a large stockpile of uranium enriched to higher levels that are a step short of weapons' grade. That uranium could be used to build multiple atomic bombs, should Tehran choose to do so, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Those talks are expected to be difficult. The 2015 nuclear deal, which U.S. President Donald Trump scrapped during his first term, took more than 18 months to negotiate.

The interim deal gives negotiators 60 days to come up with a nuclear agreement, but that can be extended. It outlines lucrative incentives if Iran does reach a new agreement, including the eventual lifting of all international sanctions and a \$300 billion fund for postwar reconstruction.

Iran has already won some concessions. Following the signing of the interim deal, the U.S. lifted its blockade of Iran's ports and is allowing it to sell its oil freely. The deal also calls for Iran's assets to be unfrozen — though it's not clear how quickly.

A top banker made a case for mining to Pope Leo XIV, who has seen its impact up close

By DAVID BILLER and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The head of Latin America's top development bank made a pitch to Pope Leo XIV this week in the face of the Vatican's call to divest from the mining industry: that the mistakes of the past can be avoided in extracting rare earth minerals to supply a global tech boom.

Ilan Goldfajn, head of the Inter-American Development Bank, met privately with the pope on Friday and asserted the potential of rare earth mining, saying it could be a boon to Latin America provided there are safeguards and value is added locally.

It's probably not an easy sell. The Vatican for years has taken a firm stand against multinational mining corporations, especially in Latin America and in favor of the Indigenous peoples, whose lands and livelihoods are often ravaged when mining projects come to town.

Goldfajn's visit, which followed one earlier this year by mining executives, suggests that he recognizes the weight of the pope's words in the majority-Catholic region, and a desire to sensitize him to the possibility of a better way of doing business. Whether Leo can be swayed is another matter, given his own experience in the region and criticism of the often corrupt deals mining companies ink with governments in the developing world.

Countries have identified dozens of minerals, including copper, cobalt, lithium and nickel, as critical because they are essential for new technologies. The 17 rare earth elements are a subset of them. They're used in a wide range of products, including smartphones, semiconductors, electric vehicles and jet engines.

"It's a unique opportunity for the region, but you need to do it in the right way with the standards, the labor conditions, with the environmental conditions, the governance," Goldfajn said in an interview in Rome on June 18, one day before his meeting.

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"We have exactly the tools to do that," he added, noting the IADB has a roughly \$4 billion pipeline of critical mineral projects in the region, mostly in Chile, Argentina and Brazil, and three-quarters of that amount with private companies. He had just delivered a presentation on rare earth minerals at a finance conference, with an eye on potential European investors.

A pope who knows Peru

Mining has a checkered, centuries-long history in Latin America, from forced labor and displacement of Indigenous peoples to deforestation, poisoning of waterways and deadly dam collapses. Foreign companies withdrew much of the wealth from the earth without enriching local populations. In colonial times, silver and gold made its way across the ocean to adorn Catholic churches.

Leo, who spent two decades working as a missionary in Peru, would be intimately familiar with the plight of Indigenous peoples in mining areas and the environmental impact of extraction industries on the land. He ministered in Chulucanas, in the archdiocese of Piura, which has huge copper mining projects, and in Trujillo, known for its gold deposits. His final Peruvian posting, Chiclayo, is a big logistical hub for northern Peru's extraction industries.

"He must have seen both sides: the promise, the future, but also the challenges," Goldfajn said of Leo's time in Peru. He noted that Leo held a private audience with a group of top mining executives in January, which he heard from them had been "very constructive."

But two months later, the Vatican launched a campaign to encourage divestment from mining companies. At a Vatican news conference, top officials held up an ecumenical Christian network, known as the Church and Mining Network, that is active in particular in Latin America. The campaign seeks to encourage local churches to review their investment strategies and divest where needed, and to share information especially with Indigenous groups about the types of extraction occurring on their lands.

Leo is expected to visit Peru in November, including places where he ministered. In each of the three sub-Saharan countries he visited during his April trip to Africa — Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea — he blasted the "colonization" of Africa's minerals by mining companies.

It makes sense for people like Goldfajn to try to engage Leo, even if the pope alone won't move investment decisions, Bryan Harris, managing partner at Sabio, a Latin America-focused strategic advisory firm, wrote in an email.

"The decades he spent in Peru give him personal credibility and his messaging on mining sets the tone for how dioceses and parishes across the continent will engage with mining companies and projects," said Harris, who consults for international mining companies in the region. "These groups are often the basis of local opposition movements to mining, so the Pope has considerable sway on whether relations are confrontational or conciliatory."

Harris noted that processing of rare earths can be extremely dirty, involving heavy chemical use that can contaminate water resources without close monitoring of companies' sustainability commitments and enforcement by federal regulators.

Mining as colonization in modern day

Leo's predecessor, Pope Francis, a native of Argentina, singled out the toll of mining in his 2015 environmental encyclical "Praised Be," noting the pollution of underground water systems as a result of runoff, the mercury pollution in gold mining or sulfur dioxide pollution in copper mining.

Francis said it was "essential" for Indigenous communities to be the principal dialogue partners when large projects affecting their land are being considered.

The Vatican didn't provide any readout of Leo's private audience with Goldfajn. In a separate audience Friday, Leo met with participants in a conference at the Vatican's environmental educational center named for Francis' 2015 encyclical. He denounced the profit-at-all cost mentality of those who seek to plunder the earth "at the expense of the most vulnerable and enhances the risk of dehumanization."

There are 75 million tons (82.7 million U.S. tons) of rare earth oxides around the world, more than half in China, and with Brazil home to the second-largest reserves, according to the U.S. Geological Survey's most recent estimate.

An Israeli strike hits a Gaza City apartment, killing 2 children, Palestinian health officials say

By WAFSA SHURAFSA Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza (AP) — An Israeli strike early Saturday killed at least two children in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian health officials said.

Despite an October ceasefire between Israel and the militant group Hamas, the enclave has seen near-daily Israeli attacks that have killed over 1,007 Palestinians, the Gaza Health Ministry said.

Saturday's strike hit an apartment in Gaza City around 2 a.m. local time, according to the ministry, with the death toll expected to rise as rescue teams work on recovering more bodies. There was no immediate information on the number of the wounded.

At the site of the attack, an Associated Press reporter saw scattered rubble and chunks of concrete stained with blood.

The bodies of the two sisters, 4-year-old Zina and 14-year-old Lana, were sent to Shifa Hospital's morgue, where they lay shrouded in white hospital bags, surrounded by family members.

"I was sitting at home. The rocket fell on us without a warning," said their cousin, Mohammad Safadi, who had a forehead wound.

He said both he and his wife were wounded in the attack.

"This ceasefire the occupation and the negotiation team speak of ... is this really a ceasefire? We are civilians. I never held a weapon," Safadi added.

The Israeli military didn't immediately issue a statement, but said it was looking into the incident. Israel says it is targeting Hamas and other militants who pose a threat.

Five Israeli soldiers have been killed since the truce.

The war erupted when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage on Oct. 7, 2023. Israel's retaliatory military offensive in the Gaza Strip has since killed 73,018 Palestinians, including those slain since the ceasefire, Gaza's Health Ministry said Saturday.

The health ministry, part of the Hamas-led government, is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records that are generally considered reliable by United Nations agencies and independent experts. It does not distinguish between civilians and militants but says women and children make up around half of all fatalities.

Mourners bury a 6-month-old Ebola victim in the Congo outbreak's third orphanage death

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and WILSON MCMAKIN Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Mourners gathered Friday to bury a 6-month-old girl who died from Ebola earlier this week, the third child to die at an orphanage in eastern Congo as authorities have struggled to contain the latest outbreak.

Carrying a cross, people stood at a distance as the small coffin was lowered into the ground by masked and gloved health workers, and a Catholic priest prayed over her body.

"It's a feeling of sadness because we have lost one of our own, a daughter of the church," said Father Innocent Ndogo.

"As we have always said, the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away."

Ituri, the region at the center of the current outbreak, has reported more than 90% of the cases. The response has been complicated by residents clashing with healthcare professionals over disrupted burials and the response to the outbreak, which has been militarized at times.

The impersonal nature of safe burial practices and the severity of the epidemic were evident on Friday as only healthcare workers in protective gear were allowed to handle the coffin and the burial.

Bundibugyo, the type of Ebola in this outbreak, has no approved treatment or vaccine, and even some

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health workers have said they don't have the masks, gloves and other gear to protect themselves.

During a visit to Bunia on Friday, Congolese Health Minister Roger Kamba said that there were now 933 confirmed cases and 245 deaths from the current outbreak. Kamba also stated that all health centers will be free in Ituri and that healthcare workers bonuses will be doubled.

There are 35,000 suspected potential contacts, Africa's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday.

Despite the rapid spread of the current outbreak, it is still not nearly as deadly as a 2014 outbreak of Ebola that killed more than 11,000.

With no approved vaccines or treatments, the Bundibugyo strain was not tested for in the early days. This lack of testing is one of the reasons the outbreak has spread to such an extent. The more common Zaire virus, for which there is a vaccine, was responsible for most of Congo's past 16 outbreaks of the disease.

Alex Lock, a communications officer at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, asked people to resist feeling indifferent.

"She was a baby. She had her whole life ahead of her. Unfortunately, she was taken by the disease, a disease that, as you know, is transmitted from one person to another," Lock said.

Although the outbreak is concentrated in Ituri, cases have also been recorded in the North Kivu and South Kivu provinces and have spread across the border to Uganda, where 19 confirmed cases have been reported and two people have died.

2 roadside bombs in northwest Pakistan kill at least 7

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Two roadside bombs in restive northwestern Pakistan killed at least seven people on Saturday, authorities said.

The first targeted a vehicle, while the second went off as rescuers responded to the blast in Bannu, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, senior police official Yasir Afridi said, adding both were controlled remotely.

Afridi said five people were killed in the first blast and two in the second. Three people were also wounded, he said. A search operation to find those responsible is underway.

No group immediately claimed responsibility, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, who have been blamed for similar attacks in the past.

President Asif Ali Zardari strongly condemned the bombings. In a statement, he conveyed condolences to the families of those killed and prayed for the speedy recovery of the wounded.

Without naming any group, Zardari issued a warning to "internal and external handlers of terrorism" who provide safe havens, logistical support and financial assistance to militant networks.

Pakistan has experienced a surge in militant violence in recent years, much of it claimed by the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP. The group is separate from, but allied with, Afghanistan's Taliban, who seized power in Kabul in 2021. Pakistani officials say many TTP leaders and fighters have found sanctuary across the border in Afghanistan.

Nigerian migrants returning from South Africa face the same economic issues they left behind

By OPE ADETAYO Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — When the flight carrying hundreds of Nigerians fleeing South Africa landed in Lagos last week, the first feeling of passenger Iniebong James was one of relief. Then came worry.

Nearly two weeks after his return to his homeland, James, 52, is trying to settle back into the life he left 10 years ago when he packed his suitcases and headed for South Africa on a six-month visitor's visa. He overstayed his visa and, despite lacking permission to stay, built a life as a car mechanic in the country's Eastern Cape Province.

He was coping until he was attacked by anti-immigrant protesters in May, leaving him with a head wound,

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he told The Associated Press.

The attack on James came in the midst of a sharp rise in anti-migrant sentiment in South Africa in recent months, when there have been marches calling for immigrants in the country illegally to leave and reports of violence against some foreign nationals.

Hundreds of migrants from Nigeria and several other African countries have been repatriated from South Africa recently by their governments, citing threats of violence against them and a growing sense of tension.

South Africa has for years attracted foreign nationals from across Africa, including many from Nigeria, because of its relative wealth and opportunity. But outbursts of xenophobic violence against foreigners also have accompanied that sporadically. South Africans sometimes blame foreigners for high levels of unemployment and poverty, putting a strain on public services and for being involved in crime.

Before moving to South Africa, James worked as a truck driver for a haulage company in Lagos, but the company closed in 2016 when Nigeria's economy entered its first recession in two decades. Unemployment worried him, but it was the dayslong power outages that pushed him to finally leave.

To survive with an expired visa in South Africa, James said he had to bribe community police officers 200 rands (\$12.14) a week to operate his shop. Twice, he paid immigration officers when he had been arrested. The AP could not verify this claim.

James said he is happy to be home as he now has his "freedom," but the economy that made him leave is much worse and he is worried that getting a job will be harder.

"I would submit my CV if anybody can accept me, but I am still hoping for the government to help me (with a job)," he said.

Starting over again is very difficult

When Nigeria's government announced a repatriation flight last month to bring back its nationals, James thought he should come back home and try again.

He was one of the first group of Nigerians repatriated from South Africa on June 11.

Over the past decade, the economy has fallen, leading to far-reaching economic reforms by President Bola Tinubu in 2023. Those reforms included the removal of decades-long fuel subsidies that kept fuel prices low, influencing retail prices of nearly every good and service in the West African nation and allowing the value of the naira to be dictated by market forces.

The reforms have sparked skyrocketing inflation, which was compounded by the U.S.-Iran war, bringing fuel prices to nearly \$1 per liter. When James left in 2016, fuel cost 85 naira a liter (\$0.1), and on the day he returned it was selling for 1,400 naira (\$1.03).

"Everything is too expensive," he said.

The government said the returnees will "receive the appropriate assistance and support before being reunited" with their families.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not respond to questions about long-term plans for the repatriated citizens.

"Reparation is not transformation," said Margaret Monyani, founder of OLAM Africa Research Institute, a Johannesburg-based migration think-tank. "Returning is not always as straightforward as it sounds. People just think, go back home and start again. No, what is home?"

"We don't want to employ foreigners"

Omotola Adeniyi, another Nigerian migrant, joined her mother in South Africa in 2015 when she was 8 years old. Her mother enrolled her and her sister in high school, but after that, she was unable to find a job and proceed to university.

"After I finished high school, that's when I saw real life because everywhere I looked for a job, all I could get was, 'No, we don't want to employ foreigners,'" Adeniyi said.

She started saving for a flight back to Nigeria last year, but the fare was too high. So she accepted Nigeria's offer of an airline ticket home. But having been away for 11 years, Adeniyi said home feels foreign now.

The latest protests have sparked diplomatic reactions from governments across the continent, including Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi and others who have repatriated hundreds of their citizens from the country. Nigeria and Ghana summoned South Africa's diplomatic officials and issued strong public statements.

"The price of your peace, and the safety of your children, is worth any sacrifices you have to make, or any assets you have to leave behind when fleeing a conflict zone or hate-infested environment. Survival is the noblest form of vengeance," Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, told James and others when they arrived in a statement delivered by her representatives.

Despite the attacks on foreigners, experts say South Africa still remains a destination of choice for most African migrants due to its more advanced economy and infrastructural development.

"It doesn't mean South Africa has the perfect institutions, but they're working to a large extent," Monyani said.

James Burrows, director of classic TV comedies including 'Cheers' and 'Friends,' dies at 85

By BETH HARRIS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — James Burrows, who helped create volumes of laughter as director of more than a thousand episodes of such classic television comedies as "Cheers," "Taxi," "Friends" and "Will and Grace," died Friday. He was 85.

His family confirmed his death in a statement to People, saying he "passed away peacefully today surrounded by his family." No location or cause of death was provided.

Burrows spent his career behind the camera specializing in situation comedies. Few viewers recognized him or knew his name, other than to see it flash quickly on the screen in the opening credits. But they knew his work.

Burrows got his start in television relatively late at age 35 in 1974, directing episodes of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "The Bob Newhart Show," and "Laverne & Shirley."

He cocreated "Cheers," directing 243 of the 273 episodes, as well as all 246 episodes of "Will and Grace."

He also helmed multiple episodes of such hits as "Frasier," "Friends" and "Mike & Molly" and the pilots of "Two and a Half Men" and "The Big Bang Theory."

Sweet spot of script, performance and chemistry

"When I direct a television show, I try to reach that sweet spot where the best script meets the best performance and the best chemistry between performers," Burrows wrote in his 2022 memoir "Directed by James Burrows." "Hitting that exact moment, where these factors land in combination, results in the sweetest and most enduring laugh."

His family said, "Burrows understood that great comedy was never simply about laughter. It was about humanity, connection, and truth. That understanding became the foundation of a career that forever changed television."

"But beyond his remarkable achievements, Burrows will be remembered for something even greater: his kindness, generosity, and unwavering belief in the people around him. He possessed a rare ability to make everyone better and was known for remembering every person he met by name, making colleagues at every level feel seen, valued, and appreciated," the family statement said.

The majority of Burrows' shows aired on NBC, whose "Must See TV" slogan promoted its Thursday night lineup in the early 1990s that included "Friends" and "Frasier."

"Jimmy Burrows was the man behind the curtain. He knew how to make us laugh, what buttons to push and was the absolute master of getting the most out of every joke," NBC said in a statement. "His loss to the television comedy world is immeasurable. Every time you have a smile on your face watching 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show,' 'Taxi,' 'Cheers,' 'Will & Grace,' 'Friends' and countless others, think of Jimmy and know he made all our lives funnier."

Following in his father's path

Born James Edward Burrows on Dec. 30, 1940, in Los Angeles, he moved to New York when he was 5 years old. He spent five years in the Metropolitan Opera Children's Chorus until his voice started to change. He attended LaGuardia High School of Music & Art.

His father was writer, director and producer Abe Burrows, whose Broadway hits included "Guys and

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Dolls" and "Can-Can." The elder Burrows also mentored Larry Gelbart, future creator and producer of the TV show "MASH."

The younger Burrows spent hours of his youth in theaters and studios watching his father work, dining with him at such famed New York haunts as Sardi's and Gallagher's and meeting celebrities who attended his father's New Year's Eve parties.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Oberlin College, Burrows attended the graduate program of the Yale School of Drama, where his classmates included actor-comedian Robert Klein, playwright John Guare and film director John Badham.

At Yale, he was required to take directing classes and he got hooked.

Burrows' first sitcom experience was as Burl Ives' dialogue coach on "O.K. Crackerby!" which was directed by his father and ran for one season on ABC in 1965.

From there, he was an assistant on "The Patty Duke Show." He moved back to New York and worked for Broadway producers Lee Guber, Frank Ford and Shelly Gross. He first met actor Moore while working on the Broadway production of "Holly Golightly," an adaptation of "Breakfast at Tiffany's" that was directed by his father.

Burrows eventually worked as a stage manager for various road productions, where he met such actors as Hugh O'Brien, Zsa Zsa Gabor and Julie Harris.

Catching a break with Mary Tyler Moore

By 1974, after working in dinner theater and summer stock, he turned on his television and saw Moore's eponymous TV show. He wrote her a letter asking if there was any opening "small or smaller" at her production company that he could fill, according to his memoir.

Moore's husband and business partner, Grant Tinker, invited Burrows to Los Angeles to direct an episode of the comedy. He apprenticed for MTM Enterprises, which had four sitcoms on the air at the same time.

Burrows cited his theater background for learning how to give actors direction and block out scenes. He's credited for being one of the first sitcom directors to increase the typical multicamera television shoot from three to four cameras.

The common thread between Burrows' shows were the bonds between friends and unrelated families, whether it was the motley crew of regulars meeting at the bar in "Cheers" or the drivers working toward a better life in "Taxi" or the 20-somethings sharing the same apartment building in "Friends."

"The best sitcoms transcend the screen and reach out and grab the audience by the throat and by the heart," Burrows wrote in his memoir.

Actors Danny DeVito and Rhea Perlman worked with Burrows over 16 seasons between "Taxi" and "Cheers."

"He was the very best at his craft. His positive spirit, boundless energy, and tireless work defined what it takes to run a show and keep people laughing," they said in a statement. "He will always be in our hearts."

Burrows relished discovering new acting talent while directing more than 75 pilots that were picked up as series.

"Having directed over a thousand shows means that almost any night you can turn on your television or go online and find a show that I directed. I'm very proud of that," he wrote in his memoir.

In 2019, Burrows was an executive producer on live productions of "All in the Family" and "The Jeffersons" with famous actors re-creating episodes of those 1970s comedies.

"Jimmy was the greatest comedic television director in the history of the medium," his agent Rick Rosen said in a statement. "He directed the most iconic, defining shows of generations. Always a gentleman, it was an absolute honor to represent him."

Burrows was married in 1997 to Debbie Easton, whom he met when she worked as a hairstylist on "Frasier." Daughters Kat Schatzow, Ellie Gluck and Maggie Burrows, who followed her father into directing, are from his first marriage to Linda Solomon, who died in 2004. His stepdaughter Paris is from his wife's previous marriage. He has a sister, Laurie Burrows Grad, and seven grandchildren.

Massive fire destroys resort in Dominican Republic and forces evacuation of almost 1,700 tourists

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — A large fire almost completely destroyed a luxury resort in the Dominican Republic on Friday, forcing the evacuation of almost 1,700 tourists, authorities said.

Local media reported an Italian tourist died in the fire and several other tourists required medical assistance.

The Viva Dominicus Beach by Wyndham resort is located in Bayahibe, a popular destination for U.S. and international tourists on the Dominican Republic's southeastern coast.

Authorities reported about 1,690 tourists had to be evacuated from the resort to other hotels and nearby housing facilities because of the massive blaze.

The cause of the blaze was under investigation and the country's Emergency Operations Center said it appeared the "fire spread rapidly" due to wind and because part of the resort's roof was made of thatch.

Viva Wyndham's other nearby resort, the Dominicus Palace, was not damaged by the fire and was operating as normal, the center said.

As Juneteenth is celebrated across the US, Obama's presidential center opens in Chicago

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — As people gathered across the U.S. to celebrate Juneteenth on Friday, former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama welcomed the first visitors to his presidential center.

Located on a sprawling campus on Chicago's South Side, the center honoring the nation's first Black president has been designed to inspire people to make the change they want to see in their own communities. It's the kind of contemplation that also comes as Americans gather for Juneteenth, which celebrates the end of slavery in the U.S.

The holiday marks June 19, 1865, when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, at the end of the Civil War with an order declaring the state's enslaved people to be free with "absolute equality." By then, 2 1/2 years had passed since the Emancipation Proclamation declared the freedom of enslaved people in the South.

"Juneteenth represents not just a commemoration of the end of slavery but it's also part of the ongoing struggle for absolute equality and that ideal in American life," said W. Caleb McDaniel, a Rice University professor and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book "Sweet Taste of Liberty."

Obama's presidential center in Chicago

The grand opening of the Obama Presidential Center includes days of events following Thursday's star-studded dedication ceremony. In addition to greeting visitors Friday as the center opened to the public for the first time, the couple also read to children gathered there.

Tyrone Sturgis, 62, said it had been a beautiful experience to see all of the people from different walks of life explore the new presidential center on Friday.

"For this center to open on Juneteenth, on the South Side of Chicago, it's extraordinary, it's awesome," he said.

The center's public opening arrives as a symbolic convergence of legacy and liberation. The nation is deeply divided politically and grappling with renewed questions about the arc of racial progress as the Supreme Court hollowed out the Voting Rights Act, endangering Black political representation in Congress.

The nearly 20-acre (8-hectare) campus includes a museum featuring a life-sized replica of the Oval Office, a garden designed by Michelle Obama complete with lettuce and strawberry plants, a professional-grade basketball court, a picnic area with grills and a new branch of the Chicago Public Library. Visitors can experience high-tech and hands-on exhibits spanning the campaigns, key moments of Obama's presidency and life at the White House.

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The spaces are designed to bring people together on a campus expected to draw as many as 1 million visitors annually, but the center also aims to encourage personal reflection. Louise Bernard, the museum's director, has said they're "inviting people to bring change home, however change may be defined, both small or large."

The history of Juneteenth

This is the fifth year since Juneteenth was designated as a federal holiday by former President Joe Biden, who served as Obama's vice president. But the celebrations, which began in Texas and then spread across the country, have a rich and long history in Black America, with the day often spent gathering for picnics and cookouts.

The holiday — a combination of "June" and "nineteenth" — marks the day when U.S. Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger and his troops arrived in the Texas port city with the declaration of freedom in General Order No. 3.

As the third year of the Civil War neared, President Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring the freedom of "all persons held as slaves" in the still rebellious states of the Confederacy. Though, for many, it did not mean immediate freedom but a promise of liberation, to be secured with a Union victory.

"It really required the force of arms and the success of U.S. armies to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation," McDaniel said.

About six months after Granger's arrival in Galveston, the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery nationwide was ratified.

Celebrations across the nation this year

Juneteenth's birthplace was celebrated with a daylong gathering at a Galveston park with music and fireworks, a worship service in a historic Black church and a parade that included brass bands and brought out families who braved temperatures in the 80s. Those in attendance were invited to join a community picnic after the parade ended.

In nearby Houston there was a lineup of musical artists and a domino tournament at Emancipation Park, established in 1872 by a group of formerly enslaved men.

Hundreds of other cities across the U.S. announced events over the long weekend, including a parade in Atlanta, a bike ride in Los Angeles and a festival on Martha's Vineyard. People also gathered for community projects to mark the day, including a group of schoolchildren in Vermont.

Several cities across the U.S. hosted walks named for Opal Lee, the Texas woman who pushed for years to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. Participants walked 2 1/2 miles to symbolize the 2 1/2 years it took for the Emancipation Proclamation to be enforced in Texas. Lee, known as the "grandmother of Juneteenth," turns 100 this year.

Reflecting on a continuing struggle

Black Texans embraced the date of Granger's arrival as one to celebrate, even as the Ku Klux Klan was established in Texas by 1868. By the 1880s, "it was difficult to find a significant community in Texas where it wasn't being marked by African Americans," McDaniel said.

"They made it a community celebration, they made it a celebration of not only freedom but also a demonstration of community empowerment and institution-building," he added.

Corey D.B. Walker, dean of Wake Forest University's divinity school, said the holiday offers a way to recognize the nation's "complex history" and what it means to be a U.S. citizen, especially during efforts by President Donald Trump's administration to undermine the retelling of Black history.

"I think it really reminds people the importance of understanding a fuller, more robust portrait of our nation's history and the many contributions of many individuals who have contributed to America's experiment with democracy," Walker said.

Two trains collide north of London, killing at least 1 person and seriously injuring dozens

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

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LONDON (AP) — Two trains collided north of London on Friday, killing a driver and seriously injuring dozens of people on board. A passenger described being thrown forward by the impact then seeing fellow travelers with broken bones and bloody injuries.

Both trains were traveling south to London St. Pancras station when they collided outside the town of Bedford around 5:15 p.m., according to information on rail tracking websites. Emergency services deployed a number of resources to the scene including an air ambulance and hazardous incident team from the East of England Ambulance Service.

"We know that a number of people have been injured and one person has very sadly died," police said in a statement. "A major incident has been declared, and officers are continuing to respond at the scene alongside colleagues from Bedfordshire Police and the local Fire and Rescue and Ambulance Services."

The East of England Ambulance Service later said that 11 people had very serious injuries, 22 were seriously injured and 56 had minor injuries.

Eddie Dempsey, the general secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, said the fatality was a train driver.

Peter Knapp, a passenger, said he was in the rear train when the collision occurred without any warning. "There was a moment of being flung into the chair in front, and then I saw smoke," Knapp said. "People were crying, screaming. People were so scared and confused."

"I got up and I saw a lot of people who were unable to speak, had broken legs," he added. "And then I managed to get out of the train and because I'm quite thin I was able to squeeze out through the gap in the doors."

Photos and videos posted on social media showed dozens of people, some with bandages but many who appeared uninjured, standing and sitting among emergency vehicles parked on a road that runs parallel to the train tracks.

The RMT union, which represents many railway workers, said it was monitoring the situation and expressed its concern over reports of "serious injuries" sustained by both train staff and passengers.

East Midlands Railway said in a statement that the 4:40 p.m. train from Corby to St. Pancras had been involved in the collision with the 3:50 p.m. train from Nottingham to the same station. The company said it had canceled all trains to and from St. Pancras for the rest of Friday and it was unable to confirm the schedule for Saturday.

President Donald Trump unveils the new Air Force One, a converted Qatari jet

By SEUNG MIN KIM and MANUEL BALCE CENETA Associated Press

JOINT BASE ANDREWS, Md. (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday showed off the new Air Force One, a formerly Qatari-owned jumbo jet that has been converted into the official U.S. presidential aircraft.

The new aircraft eschews the Kennedy-era robin's egg blue exterior of the old plane for a bolder look, with the underbelly of the plane painted navy blue with a red stripe above it. The plane's left side, where the president boards, features the presidential seal, while the tail of the aircraft has a massive American flag on it.

"This plane was transformed into a flying White House at a level of luxury that nobody has ever seen before," Trump said from inside the massive Joint Base Andrews hangar, as a couple hundred assembled Air Force personnel looked on. He spoke after stepping off the new plane in a dramatic flourish, as his signature tune "God Bless the USA" played.

He confirmed that he would be taking the new jet to the NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, next month and indicated he would be returning to China "at some point," presumably a reference to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit that China is hosting in November. His return from the Group of 7 summit in France this week was the last planned trip aboard the old Air Force One, he said.

"Now, when we land at airports in London and in Germany and different places, nobody tops this one,

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and that's the way we have to have it for our country," Trump said, noting that the colors and the design were to "my taste, I will say."

He added that the new Air Force One will do a flyover during the July 4 celebrations next month.

The gift from Qatar is serving as a "bridge" aircraft to carry the president until the new planes ordered directly from Boeing arrive. That is currently slated for 2028.

The administration formally accepted a luxury Boeing 747 jet from Qatar last year to be used as the presidential airplane, despite questions about the ethics and legality of accepting such an expensive gift from a foreign government. Trump has insisted in the past that he would not fly around in the Qatari jet once he leaves office and said it would instead be donated to a future presidential library.

Trump on Friday said the U.S. was in a "little bit of a logjam" as they awaited the delivery of the new jets directly from Boeing, which had originally been scheduled for 2024 but have been delayed. He recalled asking the emir of Qatar for use of one of their planes.

"See, a normal president wouldn't do this. A normal president wants to stay away from aircraft," Trump said Friday. "But our country has to be represented properly."

The Air Force said in a news release Friday that any plane deemed Air Force One "must meet rigorous security requirements" and that the Qatari plane "was modified under a disciplined engineering approach that prioritized these exact core capabilities above all else." The Air Force also said "much of the previous head of state interior layout" of the plane was kept intact.

The Air Force has said in the past that security modifications to the jet would cost less than \$400 million.

Trump's efforts to reimagine the presidential airplane date back to his first administration, when he directed that an incoming fleet of new jets would adopt a color scheme that was nearly identical to that of his personal airplane. Then-President Joe Biden reversed the decision in March 2023 as an Air Force review suggested that the darker colors could increase costs and delay delivery of the new jets, but once Trump returned to office, he returned to his desired colors for the plane.

Other government jets that carry other top administration officials will also use the similar red, white and navy color scheme, the Air Force said earlier this year.

An Air Force spokesperson, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive plans, told The Associated Press that the two current planes, known as VC-25As, will not be retiring. Instead, they will remain in the fleet until the new Boeing planes, referred to as VC-25Bs, come into service, the spokesperson said.

It is unclear how the older jets will be used but the spokesperson said that both the Qatari jet as well as the VC-25As will be available for use and "the Presidential Airlift Group will select the appropriate aircraft for each mission based on operational requirements."

Judge denies Biden's bid to block release of transcripts linked to special counsel inquiry

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

A federal judge on Friday rejected former President Joe Biden's attempt to block the Trump administration from releasing to a conservative group the recordings that Biden made with a ghostwriter.

U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich found that the public interest in the material outweighed whatever privacy rights Biden had, but she effectively put her ruling on hold for up to three weeks so Biden could appeal.

The recordings were obtained by special counsel Robert Hur in the course of his investigation into whether Biden improperly retained classified documents while a senator and vice president. Republicans in Congress demanded them after Hur declined to file charges against the then-president.

Biden's Democratic administration refused to turn over the recordings and transcripts from 2016 and 2017, leading congressional Republicans to hold his attorney general, Merrick Garland, in contempt.

President Donald Trump's Justice Department authorized the release of the materials. That led Biden last month to sue to seek to block the release to a staffer at the conservative Heritage Foundation who had formally requested the records.

Biden objected to the release as an invasion of privacy, saying the recordings included him discussing sensitive personal matters such as the death of his older son, Beau Biden. But Friedrich found that the administration redacted that material.

The judge wrote that the materials "contain no mention of highly sensitive topics like illness or death, nor do they mention any non-public persons, including members of Biden's family."

Representatives for Biden did not immediately comment but asked Friedrich to bar release of the material while they appeal her decision. The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Friedrich was nominated by Trump, a Republican, in 2017.

Hur's yearlong investigation led to a 345-page report that questioned the effects of Biden's age and his mental competence but recommended no criminal charges against the then-81-year-old. Hur said he found insufficient evidence to prosecute a case in court successfully.

The transcripts of five hours of Biden interviews with federal prosecutors was released that same year. While Biden was adamant that he treated classified information seriously, the transcript shows that he was at times fuzzy about dates and details and he said he was unfamiliar with the paper trail for some of the sensitive documents he handled.

Tyre in southern Lebanon marks Muharram holy month after destruction from Israel-Hezbollah war

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

TYRE, Lebanon (AP) — Wearing a yellow scarf showing her son killed fighting for Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, Iman Dilbani wept during a religious sermon Friday in the battered southern city of Tyre during the Islamic holy month of Muharram.

Tyre, Lebanon's fourth largest city, has been devastated by the Israel-Hezbollah war that reached a reported ceasefire Friday, with damaged buildings and structures reduced to rubble seen on almost every street following intense Israeli airstrikes.

Muharram is among the holiest months for Shiite Muslims and marks the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussein, and his 72 companions in the battle of Karbala in the seventh century in present-day Iraq.

Dilbani and hundreds more gathered Friday in a lot in the coastal city for a mourning ceremony, many wearing scarves or holding portraits of relatives killed.

Portraits of Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Kassem and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khomeini were placed above the podium, with the lot surrounded by red and black banners with Hussein's name. A young girl held a portrait of Khomeini as she stood next to her father, who wept while listening to the sermon. The attendees wore black as they would at a funeral.

The devastating war in Lebanon makes the month of Muharram even more meaningful for its Shiite Muslims. Some residents placed banners with Hussein's name on the ruins of their homes.

The mourning over the deaths of Hussein and his companions reaches to its peak on Ashoura, the 10th day of Muharram, which millions observe worldwide.

After Hezbollah fired rockets toward northern Israel on March 2 in solidarity with its ally Iran, Israel launched massive aerial bombardments that regularly struck Beirut and flattened large areas of southern and eastern Lebanon. Over one million Lebanese remain displaced, and Israeli ground forces invaded the country, controlling swaths of southern Lebanon. Almost 4,000 people have been killed in Israeli strikes, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Hezbollah meanwhile fired rockets and launched drone attacks into northern Israel.

"Given what has been happening in our world today, and seeing the martyrs and the destruction, no human mind can bear all of that unless they are a believer in the teachings of Imam Hussein," said Sheikh Abdulkareem al-Rahi, one of the event's organizers.

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Shiite Muslims say Hussein's values teach steadfastness and the importance of fighting against injustice, no matter how difficult.

"We learned from Imam Hussein's teachings the struggle and martyrdom, and to stay on his path and to offer our youth," Dilbani said. "I have three more sons, and I am willing to offer more of them if there is a need."

Lebanon has been scrambling for a ceasefire, and the United States' ceasefire agreement with Iran includes ending hostilities in the tiny Mediterranean country, though the fighting has not ended. Hezbollah has maintained that it will continue fighting as long as Israel continues to strike and occupy parts of southern Lebanon.

Israel and Hezbollah agreed to halt fighting Friday, although the failure of past ceasefires has left many in Lebanon skeptical.

A cleric speaking through a sound system at the event slammed Hezbollah critics who say they lost the war, despite the heavy losses, comparing their situation to that of the revered imam in Karbala.

Imam Hussein's teachings "are an institution, in every way, in their values and their pride," said Sheikh Ibrahim Qassir, the imam of the town of Deir Qanoun En Nahr near Tyre, which was widely damaged during the war.

"And that is why we are still here, and we will be victorious, and victorious, and victorious."

US push to get Iran talks started hits an early bump. Vance stays at home, for now

By AAMER MADHANI, JAMEY KEATEN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

ZURICH (AP) — The American push to quickly begin high-stakes talks with Iran hit a snag Friday, just days after the signing of an agreement that opens a two-month window for negotiations on Tehran's nuclear program and returning oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz to prewar levels.

Iranian officials did not travel as planned to Switzerland, insisting that Israeli strikes on Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon must stop before the talks can take place, according to three regional officials and a person familiar with the matter. They were not authorized to publicly discuss the ongoing mediation to try to get the talks rescheduled and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The situation was fluid as Israel and Hezbollah agreed on Friday to renew their ceasefire, according to a U.S. official and regional officials. It remains to be seen whether that could help put the U.S.-Iran talks back on track.

In Washington, President Donald Trump lashed out once again in the midst of the intensified fighting in Lebanon and the stalled nuclear talks.

"We didn't meet out of desperation, Iran did," Trump wrote in a social media post Friday. "They are FINISHED! We'll play out the 60 days. They get no money, not ten cents!"

Vance was ready for Swiss talks

Trump's vice president, JD Vance, had been prepared to make an overnight flight to meet with his Iranian counterparts at a mountainside resort in the tiny Swiss village of Obbürgen and begin the technical talks.

Vance's staff and a small group of journalists had gathered at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington in anticipation of the trip. Dozens of White House officials, advance staffers and more media were already in Switzerland.

Then the trip was called off — abruptly and for the time being.

A White House statement said Vance, tapped by Trump to lead the negotiations, decided to postpone his travel. It made no mention of the escalating violence in Lebanon.

"The logistics of these negotiations have never been simple or predictable," the statement said.

But, according to officials, the Iranians made clear to the White House that they had balked at starting the talks with Vance because of the Israeli action in Lebanon.

While Iranian officials and Vance did not make it to Switzerland Friday, a mediator from the Gulf country

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of Qatar found his way to the resort near Lucerne, Switzerland, where the U.S.-Iran talks are to be held. Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, met with the Swiss foreign minister, Ignazio Cassis.

Fighting in southern Lebanon intensifies

The fighting had intensified with at least 18 killed by Israeli airstrikes, while four Israeli soldiers were killed in southern Lebanon, officials said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that Israel's military would stay in a "security zone" of southern Lebanon as long as "Israel's security needs require it."

Israel and Hezbollah are not parties to the U.S.-Iran agreement.

Iran insists Israel must withdraw from the large swath of southern Lebanon it is occupying, but the wording of the interim deal does not explicitly require that and only ensures Lebanon's "territorial integrity."

Hours before postponing his trip, Vance gave some indication of the state of flux when he told reporters at a White House briefing that he was uncertain if the talks were going to happen this weekend.

"We think these technical negotiations start sometime this weekend," Vance said. "That's still the plan. But that could change."

Soon after Vance spoke to reporters, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, endorsed direct negotiations with the United States. His terse statement, read by state media, appeared to signal to the Islamic Republic's leadership that it could move forward with a first round of talks.

"It is obvious that the face-to-face negotiations that will be held in the future will not mean accepting the enemy's opinion," Khamenei said.

The messaging seemed to give Khamenei, who was badly wounded in the U.S. strike on Feb. 28 that killed his father, some maneuverability. Hard-liners in the Iranian government, including Khamenei's father, long opposed direct talks with the White House, especially after Trump, during his first term, pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal negotiated by Democratic President Barack Obama's administration.

The meeting was initially supposed to be a signing ceremony

Vance was initially expected to go to Switzerland to sign the agreement at a formal ceremony. Instead, Trump signed the document Wednesday during a glitzy dinner at the Palace of Versailles with French President Emmanuel Macron. Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, separately signed the agreement.

It says Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which is believed to be buried under rubble left by U.S. military strikes last year targeting Tehran's key nuclear sites, must at minimum be diluted under international supervision.

It also says Iran shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons — a commitment Tehran has made previously. Other commitments remain to be worked out.

Iran believes it's in a strong negotiating position

Iranians would be going into the talks with a measure of confidence after effectively shutting down the strait, causing global economic reverberations, said Rosemary Kelanic, director of the Middle East Program at Defense Priorities in Washington.

She said the U.S. is now "essentially trying to negotiate our way back to the prewar status quo."

Neil Quilliam, an associate fellow with the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House think tank, said the "buoyant" Iranian leadership feels it has the upper hand. The endorsement of the talks by the Iranian supreme leader "sends a very strong signal domestically: 'We're now on an equal footing with the U.S.'"

"Trump has gone from calling for regime change on Feb. 28 to this: Now they're going to sit down with us directly and talk about these big issues," Quilliam said of the Iranians' thinking. "So it's intended more for the domestic audience, and telling them: 'We are firmly in control of this. There can be no protests, no revolution: We are a new regime and we're staying put.'"

Vance has to negotiate through political division

For Vance, a likely 2028 presidential contender, how the negotiations play out could have enormous ramifications for his political fortunes.

Vance's skepticism of foreign wars was a core part of his political identity during his political rise, which

included election as a U.S. senator. Now he finds himself the chief defender of negotiating an endgame to Trump's conflict that Democrats have largely derided as a foolish gambit. Some hawkish Republicans are aghast that Trump is getting behind a settlement that could put billions of dollars into Iran's coffers.

U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said aspects of the deal are "completely out of step" with Trump's goals.

Trump fiercely criticized Obama for the 2015 nuclear agreement, which Trump argued failed to stop Tehran from advancing toward a weapon and funneled billions of dollars to the Islamic Republic. The Republican president exited the U.S. from the deal in 2018.

Trump has pushed back against comparisons to that earlier agreement, saying he had "negotiated from strength" after a major military campaign while asserting that Obama was paying the Iranians off and not receiving acquiescence.

Wicker, R-Miss., was particularly concerned about the \$300 billion fund for the reconstruction and economic development of Iran mentioned in the 14-point agreement. Trump and Vance have said no U.S. taxpayer money would go to such a fund and it would not come without concessions and reforms by Tehran.

Starmer vows to fight as Burnham's election win fuels a Labour leadership showdown

By KWIYEON HA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD, England (AP) — Labour's Andy Burnham, the popular mayor of Greater Manchester, won a special election for a seat in Parliament and signaled Friday that he will use it to challenge embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer for leadership of the country.

Starmer said he planned to fight for his job, but a growing number of colleagues urged him to make a dignified exit.

"There is this sense of collective movement," former Labour Deputy Leader Harriet Harman told the "Electoral Dysfunction" podcast. "Andy Burnham is going to become prime minister. Keir Starmer is going to be leaving office."

Burnham decisively won the seat of Makerfield in northwestern England over Rob Kenyon of the anti-immigration party Reform UK. The result cements the status of Burnham, a 56-year-old politician nicknamed the King of the North, as the top contender to replace Starmer as leader of the Labour Party and the country. Burnham won almost 55% of the 45,510 votes cast for a field of more than a dozen candidates, over 9,000 more than runner-up Kenyon.

Burnham's acceptance speech left no doubt that he wants to lead the country, and not just be one of the more than 400 Labour lawmakers in the 650-seat House of Commons.

"Everyone knows that politics isn't working," he said. "Everyone can feel that the country isn't where it should be. Tonight could, just could, be the turning point."

Starmer congratulated Burnham, writing on X that voters "chose Labour's campaign of hope and optimism over division and hate."

But the prime minister insisted he would fight any attempt to oust him.

"I will run, I will stand," if there is a Labour leadership contest, Starmer said. "I've said repeatedly I'm not going to walk away from that."

Burnham says he's the candidate of change

Burnham has led Manchester since 2017, overseeing rapid regeneration for the city where the Industrial Revolution was forged. He is pledging to repeat his signature brand of "Manchesterism" on a national scale.

Burnham said he would work to ensure that "the name Makerfield is forever synonymous with bringing about the change this country needs."

He told supporters and campaign workers on Friday that "we are going to lay out a new path for Britain."

"We need an economy that works for everybody, not a few in far-off places from here," he said. "We have an opportunity to turn the tide, to make the country feel like it's working again, to make people see that politics can make a positive difference, to make people feel hope again."

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Earlier, in his victory speech, he said Labour had "a final chance to change" and win back voters' trust. "But it is a chance now, from this result tonight, to build a new politics based on unity and hope, turning away from the path that takes us to a divided, dark politics of the kind we see in the United States," he said.

Rob Ford, professor of political science at the University of Manchester, said defeating Reform UK strengthens Burnham's claim to be Labour's biggest asset.

"The narrative he can bring is, 'No one else could have won that seat. I won that. I bring something unique. I bring an ability to renew our appeal,'" Ford said.

Voters in Makerfield, who have been the focus of international media attention during the five-week campaign, were aware their votes carried unusual weight.

"I voted Andy Burnham because I don't believe Keir Starmer has done a good job," said Ernest Sherman, 70. "So I voted tactically knowing that Andy Burnham has a chance to replace Starmer. So it will still be Labour, but he will have different views."

Labour is in power but unpopular

Starmer's popularity has cratered since he led the center-left Labour Party to a landslide election victory in July 2024.

He has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living, and been hamstrung by repeated missteps, including his decision to appoint Peter Mandelson, a scandal-tarnished friend of Jeffrey Epstein, as the U.K. ambassador to the United States.

Labour is losing liberal voters to the growing Green Party, and facing a rising Reform UK, which consistently leads in nationwide opinion polls. The Nigel Farage-led party has rapidly gained ground in post-industrial northern England areas like Makerfield, some 200 miles (320 kilometers) northwest of London.

Burnham's resounding victory gives Labour new hope of stopping the Reform tide. Farage acknowledged he was "disappointed, no question about it," with the result.

Labour's dismal performance in May's local elections spurred scores of lawmakers to demand Starmer's resignation. Wes Streeting resigned as health secretary in May, saying that "where we need vision, we have a vacuum." Streeting has said he will run in a leadership contest if there is one.

Then Josh Simons, the Labour lawmaker for Makerfield, stepped down to trigger a special election and give Burnham the chance to return to Parliament.

Britain's parliamentary system allows governing parties to change leaders midterm, with the winner becoming prime minister without the need for a national election. Under Labour rules, a lawmaker can challenge the leader if they have backing from a fifth of the party's House of Commons lawmakers — a number that stands at 81.

Burnham's victory piles pressure on Starmer to quit

Burnham will head to London to be sworn in as a lawmaker as soon as Monday. He's likely to seek a meeting with Starmer to argue that the prime minister should exit gracefully and set a timetable for his departure.

Burnham's supporters wasted no time in urging Starmer to go. Labour lawmaker Louise Haigh, a Burnham ally, said Starmer should "consider an orderly and managed transition."

"Andy won't be doing anything rash or hasty," she told Sky News. "I'm really hopeful the prime minister and Andy can come to an agreement."

Starmer insisted on Friday that he was elected on a "mandate for change" and would carry on with it. Earlier this week he suggested that he could offer Burnham a Cabinet post, an idea rebuffed by Burnham's allies.

Despite his stubborn determination, Starmer could be forced out if several members of the Cabinet tell him the game is up and quit, or threaten to quit, in protest. There could then be a leadership contest, or a coronation, depending on whether other potential candidates think Burnham has an unassailable lead.

"When things begin to slide away from a prime minister, they begin to slide away very, very quickly," said Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London.

"Over the weekend there will be all sorts of talks behind closed doors, mainly I suspect people trying to

persuade Keir Starmer ... that the game is up."

Israel and Hezbollah agree to halt fighting, officials say, as US-Iran talks hang in the balance

By ERIN CUNNINGHAM, JON GAMBRELL and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group agreed Friday to halt the heavy fighting in southern Lebanon that had threatened to unravel an interim agreement between the United States and Iran to end their war, officials said. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah immediately confirmed the truce.

It came after a heavy exchange of fire killed 47 people in Lebanon and four Israeli soldiers.

Hezbollah and Israel went to war shortly after the outbreak of the wider conflict, with Hezbollah firing rockets and drones at civilian communities in northern Israel and Israel seizing large swaths of southern Lebanon.

The interim agreement to end the Iran war has already reopened the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran effectively closed, cutting the global economy off from significant supplies of oil and natural gas. The deal would also relaunch talks on Iran's nuclear program, the core issue over which Israel and the U.S. began the war on Feb. 28.

But the accord already faces threats, chiefly from Lebanon, with the fighting there leading to a delay in the start of talks planned for Friday in Switzerland. The agreement calls for a halt to military operations in Lebanon and for its sovereignty to be respected. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah is a party to the deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep Israeli forces in southern Lebanon until the threat is eliminated. Hezbollah has refused to halt its attacks unless Israel commits to withdrawing from Lebanon, which Iran says is also a condition of the deal.

Firing goes on along Lebanese border

Hours after officials told news organizations about the truce, Israeli artillery fire could still be heard from northern Israel along the Lebanese border, and a large explosion was seen erupting inside Lebanon, according to an AP journalist in northern Israel.

Word of the attempt to halt the fighting came from two regional officials and a U.S. official. The effort was mediated by Qatar, the U.S. and Iran, the regional officials said. The three officials were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

Fighting between Israel and Hezbollah was supposed to end at 4 p.m. local time, according to a second U.S. official who was not authorized to speak publicly and also spoke on condition of anonymity.

A Hezbollah official said an agreement to stop fighting could be announced soon, but he stopped short of confirming it was in place. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Netanyahu's office did not immediately comment. However, Netanyahu posted Friday on X that, on his orders, the Israeli army had "struck powerfully" 150 Hezbollah targets, killing dozens of militants.

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said the military has not received different instructions from the government. He said Israeli forces were operating in a "forward defense zone" and would continue doing so.

The Israeli ambassador to the U.S., Yechiel Leiter, posted on X that Israel "remains firmly committed to an immediate ceasefire" if Hezbollah honors the agreement and ceases hostilities.

Iranian and U.S. officials cancel travel to Switzerland

Iranian officials did not travel as planned to Switzerland, insisting that the fighting in Lebanon must stop before the talks can take place, according to the two regional officials, an Iranian official and a fourth person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive conversations behind the scenes. U.S. Vice President JD Vance also postponed his trip.

The future talks are supposed to bring about a permanent end to the conflict.

On Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said consultations through mediators

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were ongoing regarding the next phase of negotiations to draft a final agreement.

Because the initial deal was signed digitally earlier this week, the talks in Switzerland were not urgent, and plans were underway to hold a meeting in the coming days, he said.

Fighting forces families to flee from villages

The Israeli military said four soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel, were killed in an attack on a tank in a village near the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh. An explosive drone attack wounded another five, military officials added.

Israel then launched multiple strikes against "Hezbollah infrastructure sites" in Nabatiyeh and other areas, according to a military statement, which accused the militant group of "blatant ceasefire violations."

Later, the military said it also struck targets in the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, with Lebanese media saying the village of Douris was hit.

"Israel will not tolerate attacks on our soldiers or on our territory, and it will exact a very heavy price from Hezbollah for these attacks," Netanyahu said in a statement.

Hezbollah acknowledged targeting Israeli tanks and said its attacks were in response to what it called Israel's own violation of the ceasefire. It said the attacks came after Israeli forces attempted to reach the northern side of Ali al-Taher hilltop, a strategic point that overlooks Nabatiyeh and that Israeli troops have been trying to capture.

In southern Lebanon, many were forced to flee their villages.

"The situation is lawless, we couldn't stay," said Mustafa Zain, who was with his six daughters in a pickup truck.

Israel's actions have created a rift between Israel and the U.S., with Trump becoming increasingly critical of his close ally Netanyahu, who is also facing increasing criticism at home.

Much still needs to be resolved

The discussions in Switzerland were expected to focus on Iran's nuclear program. Tehran maintains it is peaceful, though it has highly enriched uranium that could be used to build multiple atomic bombs, should it choose to do so, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Those talks are expected to be difficult. The 2015 nuclear deal, which Trump scrapped during his first term, took more than 18 months to negotiate.

The interim deal gives negotiators 60 days to come up with a nuclear agreement, but that can be extended. It outlines lucrative incentives if Iran does reach a new agreement, including the eventual lifting of all international sanctions and a \$300 billion fund for postwar reconstruction.

Already Iran has won some concessions. Following the signing of the interim deal, the U.S. lifted its blockade of Iran's ports and is allowing it to sell its oil freely. The deal also calls for Iran's assets to be unfrozen — though it's not clear how quickly.

What Americans think about Trump's handling of Iran, according to a new AP-NORC poll

By LINLEY SANDERS and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans continue to disapprove of how President Donald Trump is handling Iran, while his overall presidential approval holds steady, according to a new AP-NORC poll that was conducted as he suggested a deal with Iran had been reached.

The poll points to just how unpopular the war, which began Feb. 28, has been with Americans even as the Republican president turned abruptly from threatening Iran to reopening negotiations. Support for his handling of the war remains lopsidedly partisan. About two-thirds, 65%, of U.S. adults disapprove of how Trump is handling issues with Iran. But while the vast majority of Democrats and independents view Trump's actions negatively, only 28% of Republicans are unhappy.

Americans' views on how the president is handling Iran are roughly in line with his overall job approval, which stands at 37%, unchanged from an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in May.

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The new survey was conducted June 11-17, just after Trump called off threats to escalate the war with Iran. The poll was fielded as Trump announced a deal with Iran and authorized an end to the U.S. naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, concluding just before the deal was signed Wednesday.

Approval of Trump's actions on Iran has been low over the past few months. But in interviews, some Republicans also weren't pleased with the outcome of this week's agreement, which gives Iran an immediate benefit, allowing it to sell its oil freely again.

The deal also reopens the strait without tolls for two months, restarts talks between the U.S. and Iran over Tehran's nuclear program and calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

David Farrington, a 79-year-old Republican-leaning independent in Fort Worth, Texas, "doesn't have any love lost" for Iran, but he's frustrated the agreement focused on the strait and didn't deliver more on the country's nuclear weapons program.

"Any agreement regarding the strait is hardly what I would consider a recognizable concession on the part of Iran," Farrington said. "So, I consider that some fluff that attempts to make this agreement look better when it's not."

Trump's approval on Iran remains flat

Only about one-third of U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling Iran in the new poll, in line with May.

Donald McBride, a 28-year-old independent in Plano, Texas, is frustrated that Trump has not maintained his campaign promise to keep America out of foreign wars. McBride voted for Trump but he opposed going to war with Iran.

"I would like the war to end," he said. "The original objective of the war was to end the Iranian regime, and that's just not possible. I don't really know why we'd continue fighting."

The poll suggests most Americans want action in Iran to wrap up. Even with an agreement on the horizon, 53% of U.S. adults said American military action against Iran had "gone too far," only a slight decline from 59% in March.

About 4 in 10 Republicans, though, said in the latest poll that action has been "about right," and 37% said it had not gone far enough.

Joan Jones, a 64-year-old independent in northwest Florida, believes the United States' actions in Iran have been necessary to address the threat Iran posed.

"Those attacks are ultimately to protect us from nuclear attacks," Jones said. "I think we have to go through that ... and eliminate that worry so we don't have that hovering over us."

Few approve of Trump's approach on Israel

About one-third, 34%, of U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling Israel.

Tensions have been rising between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump as the president criticizes recent Israeli attacks in Lebanon, which jeopardized negotiations between Washington and Tehran.

James Huffman, a 69-year-old Republican in Medway, Ohio, thinks Trump is taking the wrong strategy when it comes to Netanyahu.

"Netanyahu is not going to do everything Trump wants. He's going to do what he wants," Huffman said. "I just don't think it's effective."

Only about one-third approve on the economy

About one-third of U.S. adults approve of Trump's approach to the economy. That's in line with last month, and continues a challenging stretch for Trump on the issue.

Jones, the Florida independent, is more optimistic than most. She said she can hardly leave the house some hours without getting stuck in the traffic of tourists headed to the beach on vacation. She also spots lines around the block for Starbucks, McDonalds and Chick-fil-A in her community — all signs to her that the economy is doing well overall.

"I think President Trump's policies are contributing to a better economy," Jones said.

Other Republicans are more skeptical, a troubling sign for a president who prides himself on his business acumen. Only 69% of Republicans approve of how he's handling the economy, slightly lower than the 78% who approve of how he's handling the presidency overall.