

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 1 of 74

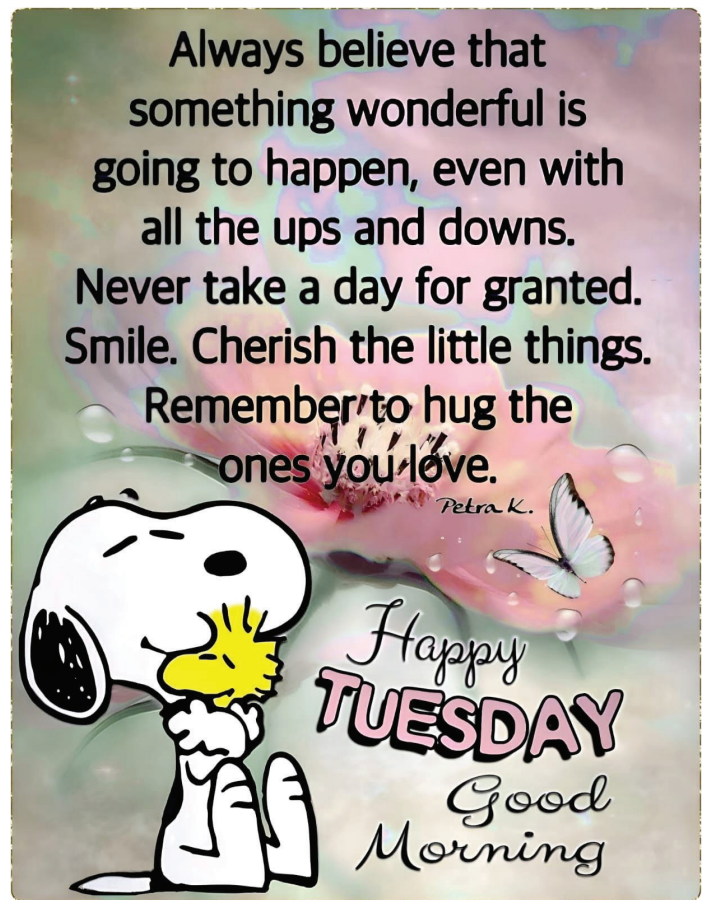
- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Groton Legion Ad](#)
- [4- Groton Chamber Ad](#)
- [5- Garages being built](#)
- [6- Groton Junior Legion splits twinbill with Sisseton](#)
- [7-8 Jr. Legion Stat Sheets](#)
- [9- Ida Hannon's Card Shower](#)
- [10- Brown County Commission Agenda](#)
- [11- EarthTalk: Polyester](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: There's a disturbance in the force of South Dakota politics](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: State board approves options for prenatal videos in schools, including one from anti-abortion group](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: More cuts could be coming to the agency that helps farmers protect the environment](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Trump 'trampled' voter privacy by feeding info into Homeland Security system, judge says](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Tuesday, June 23

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, capri blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.  
Rumble in the Jungle Boys Basketball Team Camp, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Arena/Gym  
U14 Legion at Watertown, 5 p.m.  
Sr. Legion hosts Milbank, 5:30 p.m.  
Jr. Legion at Britton, 5:30 p.m.  
U12 Baseball hosts Warner, 7 p.m., Nelson Field  
U10 Baseball hosts Warner, 5:30 p.m., Falk Field (W&R)  
U8 Baseball host Warner, 5:30 p.m. (Red), Falk Field  
U14 Softball at Warner, 5:30 p.m.

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

© 2026 Groton Daily Independent



## Wednesday, June 24

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, Catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

JVT Practice, 6-9 p.m., Gym

Sr. Legion hosts Clark, 5:30 p.m.

Jr. Legion hosts Clark, 7 p.m.

U12 Baseball at Roslyn, DH, 5:30 p.m.

U10 Baseball at Britton, DH, 5:30 p.m. (R&B)

U10 Softball hosts Sisseton (Split), 6 p.m.

U10 Softball at Claremont (Split), 6:30 p.m.

U8 Softball at Claremont, 5:30 p.m. (W&G)

## Thursday, June 25

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, green beans, fruit, garlic bread.

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

JVT Practice, 6-7:30 p.m., Gym

U10 Baseball hosts Aberdeen, DH, 5:30 p.m. (B&W)

U8 Baseball host Aberdeen, DH, 5:30 p.m. (Blue)

U8 Baseball at Columbia, DH, 5:30 p.m. (Red)

U18 Softball at Redfield, 6 p.m.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 2 of 74

# 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.**

## Starmer Bows Out

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced yesterday that he will resign, paving the way for Britain's seventh head of government in a decade. Starmer will stay on in a caretaker role until his Labour Party selects a new prime minister by September.

The decision comes after Andy Burnham—the former mayor of Greater Manchester—was elected to Parliament in a special election last week. Burnham positioned himself as Starmer's rival, calling for a change in leadership. Starmer's decline in popularity came amid uproar over his appointment of a Jeffrey Epstein associate as US ambassador and after the Labour Party suffered losses in local elections. Labour leaders had pressed Starmer to resign as polls show Nigel Farage's nationalist-populist Reform UK party may defeat Labour in the 2029 general election.

Next up, the Labour Party will accept nominations to replace Starmer from July 9-16; if Burnham is uncontested, he could assume the role as soon as next month.

## Farewell to 'The Maestro'

Alan Greenspan, the former Federal Reserve chair known as "The Maestro," died yesterday from complications of Parkinson's disease at age 100. He led the central bank from 1987 to 2006, steering the US economy through a stock market crash, the dot-com boom, the 9/11 attacks, and years of growth that made him the defining policymaker of his era.

After high school, Greenspan enrolled at Juilliard to study clarinet but dropped out to join a touring jazz band. Less than two years later, he pivoted to economics. He went on to become the first Fed chair to explain interest-rate decisions publicly, while investors parsed his convoluted communication style known as "Greenspeak." His reputation dimmed after the 2008 financial crisis; critics argued his support for low interest rates and deregulation had fueled the housing bubble. Years later, Greenspan reflected on what he got right and wrong.

Traders reportedly tracked the size of his briefcase before Federal Reserve meetings, believing a stuffed bag signaled major policy changes ahead.

## SAT Turns 100

The first SAT was administered 100 years ago today, with the goal of helping elite colleges identify promising high school students.

American psychologist and eugenicist Carl Brigham modeled the standardized test on an IQ exam used to evaluate World War I army recruits for officer positions. He said the SAT measured so-called innate intelligence, and Ivy League schools became the first to require applicants to submit their scores in the 1930s. Many schools followed suit, increasing the number of test-takers to about half a million by 1957. However, critics say SAT scores largely reflect socioeconomic background, with higher-income students historically performing better.

Over 2 million students took the SAT last year, the most since 2020, when COVID-19 closures disrupted testing. The pandemic also accelerated the test-optional movement, with around 80% of four-year institutions no longer requiring SAT scores.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 3 of 74

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NBA draft starts at 8 pm ET; Washington Wizards expected to take BYU star AJ Dybantsa as No. 1 pick. Tennis star Marketa Vondrousova suspended for four years after refusing doping test. Music executive Clive Davis, who helped launch Whitney Houston, Bruce Springsteen, and Alicia Keys to stardom, dies at age 94. Lionel Messi sets World Cup's all-time scoring record in Argentina's 2-0 victory over Austria. England faces Ghana in Boston Stadium at 4 pm ET, and Croatia takes on Panama at 7 pm ET in Toronto Stadium.

## Science & Technology

Younger generations are biologically aging faster than their older counterparts, possibly contributing to the rising prevalence of early-onset cancer. Human ancestors' body size jumped to roughly 132 pounds with the emergence of Homo erectus roughly 2 million to 2.5 million years ago, challenging the assumption that our ancestors gradually grew larger. Citizen scientist discovers rare bow-and-arrow-shaped galaxy emitting powerful jets of plasma across nearly 1.8 million light-years of space.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.4%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq -1.3%). Uber-backed Lime, an electric scooter and bike operator, seeks up to \$1.7B valuation in its US initial public offering. Amazon Prime Day begins today and runs through Friday, June 26; Amazon shifted its traditional July sales slot to June this year, citing the timing of the FIFA World Cup and America's 250th birthday celebrations.

## Politics & World Affairs

Supreme Court reinstates murder conviction for Pedro Hernandez, the former store clerk found to have killed 6-year-old Etan Patz in 1979. Patz was among the first kids whose faces appeared on milk cartons; revisit the history. Vice President JD Vance says Iran agreed to allow nuclear inspectors back into the country, while Iran says it made "no new commitments"; inspectors have had limited access since Israeli strikes on Iran in June 2025. Florida's "Alligator Alcatraz," a migrant detention center surrounded by swampland, will permanently close, sources say, after officials evacuated detainees last week over hurricane season concerns.



A poster for a live music event. It features a photograph of a woman with blonde hair and sunglasses, smiling. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with a guitar neck and the text "LIVE MUSIC AT THE LEGION!". The name "LIZZY HOFER" is written in large, bold, white letters with a red flame graphic to the left. Below the name, it says "PLAYING FRIDAY JUNE 26" in green and pink. To the right, it says "9 P.M. TO 1 A.M." and "GROTON AMERICAN LEGION". At the bottom, it says "GREAT MUSIC ★ COLD DRINKS ★ GOOD TIMES" and "EVERYONE WELCOME!" with star and flame icons.

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!

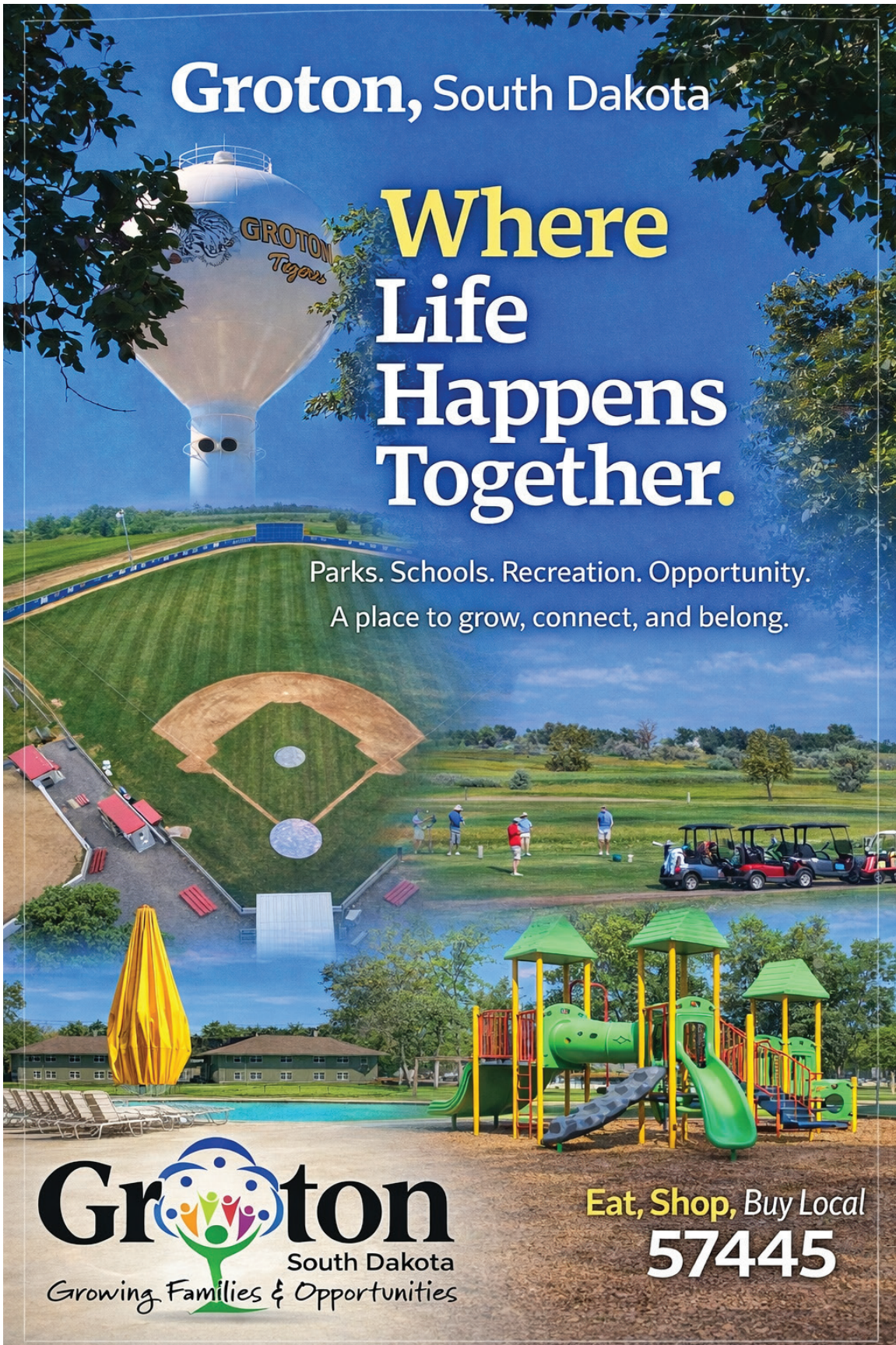
# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 4 of 74

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**

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 5 of 74



**The parking lot in downtown Groton will be getting garages built on it. Construction started on them yesterday. Wyatt Larson was approved through a special exception to build 10 garage units.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 6 of 74

## Groton Junior Legion splits twinbill with Sisseton

Groton Post 39 Junior Legion earned a split of a doubleheader with Sisseton Post 50 Junior Legion on Monday in Sisseton, dropping the opener 4-0 before rallying for a thrilling 10-9 victory in the nightcap.

In the first game, Sisseton scored twice in the opening inning and added two more runs in the third to secure the shutout win. Reggie Lincoln and Isaiah Deutsch each drove in a run during the first inning, while Lincoln added an RBI single and Aiden Chanku contributed a run-scoring groundout in the third.

Groton was limited to just two hits as Braden Fliehs and Alex Abeln each recorded singles. Jordan Schwan started on the mound for Post 39, allowing four runs, three earned, over two innings while striking out two. Sisseton's Bryson Hanson earned the win, holding Groton scoreless on two hits over five innings while striking out eight. Groton turned a double play defensively in the contest.

The second game was a back-and-forth affair that featured four lead changes before Groton pushed across the winning run in the fifth inning.

Post 39 jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the top of the first. A passed ball scored the first run before Zach Fliehs delivered an RBI single and Lincoln Shilhanek added a run-scoring groundout. Sisseton answered with four runs in the bottom half, highlighted by a two-run single from Owen Anderson.

TC Schuster's RBI double tied the game at 4-4 in the second, but Sisseton regained the lead with a pair of runs in the bottom of the inning. Groton battled back to tie the game at six in the third and took a 7-6 lead in the fourth on a Noah Scepaniak RBI groundout.

Sisseton responded again, scoring three times in the bottom of the fourth to move in front 9-7. Groton answered immediately in the fifth as Schuster and Fliehs each delivered RBI singles before the eventual winning run crossed the plate on a passed ball.

Schuster paced Groton's offense by going 3-for-3, while Fliehs finished 2-for-3 with two RBIs. Jordan Schwan drew three walks and, along with Fliehs, stole multiple bases as Groton swiped nine bases in the game. The Junior Legion squad showed patience at the plate, drawing 10 walks.

Kason Oswald started for Groton and allowed nine runs, four earned, over 3 2/3 innings. Wesley Borg earned the win in relief, tossing 1 1/3 scoreless innings while allowing just one hit.

Anderson led Sisseton offensively, going 3-for-3 with five RBIs, while Deutsch added two hits.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 7 of 74

Groton Post 39 Jr.  
Legion

0 - 4

Sisseton Post 50 Jr  
Legion

📍 Away 📅 Monday June 22, 2026

|      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | R | H | E |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GRTN | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| SSST | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | X | 4 | 5 | 0 |

## BATTING

| Groton Post 39...    | AB        | R        | H        | RBI      | BB       | SO       |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| A Abeln #5 (C)       | 3         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| J Schwan #11 (P)     | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| B Fliehs #19 (3B)    | 1         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| T Schuster #3 (SS)   | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| K Oswald #12 (1B)    | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| W Borg #1 (RF)       | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| J Bisbee #15 (2B)    | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2        |
| X Ellenbe... #8 (LF) | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| L Shilhan... #17 (P) | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| N Scepan... #7 (CF)  | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| Z Fliehs #23 (LF)    | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>17</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>8</b> |

**TB:** A Abeln, B Fliehs, **HBP:** B Fliehs, **LOB:** 7

## PITCHING

| Groton Pos...         | IP         | H        | R        | ER       | BB       | SO       | HR       |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| J Schwan #11          | 2.0        | 2        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 2        | 0        |
| <b>L Shilh... #17</b> | <b>2.0</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Totals</b>         | <b>4.0</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>0</b> |

**P-S:** J Schwan 43-18, L Shilhanek 41-22, **HBP:** L Shilhanek, **BF:** J Schwan 13, L Shilhanek 11, **E:** T Schuster, B Fliehs

| Sisseton Post 5...  | AB        | R        | H        | RBI      | BB       | SO       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| L Nielsen #22 (SS)  | 2         | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| J Hamm #5 (LF)      | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| R Anderson #10 (C)  | 3         | 2        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| B Hanson #11 (P)    | 1         | 1        | 1        | 0        | 2        | 0        |
| R Lincoln #7 (1B)   | 2         | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        |
| I Deutsch #27 (2B)  | 3         | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        |
| K Deutsch #18 (RF)  | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| A Chanku #6 (CF)    | 2         | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        |
| J Stickland #2 (3B) | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| <b>Totals</b>       | <b>17</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>4</b> |

**TB:** R Anderson 2, R Lincoln, B Hanson, L Nielsen, **HBP:** J Hamm, **LOB:** 8

| Sisseton P... | IP         | H        | R        | ER       | BB       | SO       | HR       |
|---------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| B Hanson #11  | 5.0        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 4        | 8        | 0        |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>5.0</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>0</b> |

**P-S:** B Hanson 84-49, **HBP:** B Hanson, **BF:** B Hanson 22

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 8 of 74

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion **10 - 9** Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion

📍 Away 📅 Monday June 22, 2026

|      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | R  | H | E |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|
| GRTN | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 3 |
| SSST | 4 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 9  | 7 | 2 |

## BATTING

| Groton Post 39...     | AB        | R         | H        | RBI      | BB        | SO       |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| A Abeln #5 (1B)       | 3         | 1         | 0        | 0        | 1         | 0        |
| J Schwan #11 (CF)     | 1         | 2         | 0        | 0        | 3         | 0        |
| T Schuster #3 (SS)    | 3         | 2         | 3        | 1        | 1         | 0        |
| B Fliehs #19 (3B)     | 2         | 1         | 0        | 0        | 1         | 1        |
| Z Fliehs #23 (DH)     | 3         | 1         | 2        | 2        | 0         | 0        |
| L Shilhan... #17 (RF) | 3         | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1         | 1        |
| J Bisbee #15 (C)      | 2         | 0         | 0        | 0        | 1         | 1        |
| N Scean... #7 (2B)    | 2         | 1         | 0        | 1        | 1         | 0        |
| X Ellenbe... #8 (LF)  | 2         | 1         | 0        | 0        | 1         | 2        |
| CR: W Borg... #1 (P)  | 0         | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        |
| <b>Totals</b>         | <b>21</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>5</b> |

**2B:** T Schuster, L Shilhanek, **TB:** T Schuster 4, Z Fliehs 2, L Shilhanek 2, **SAC:** J Bisbee, **CS:** J Schwan, **HBP:** Z Fliehs, B Fliehs, **SB:** N Scepianiak, Z Fliehs 5, J Schwan 2, B Fliehs, **LOB:** 9

## PITCHING

| Groton Pos... | IP         | H        | R        | ER       | BB       | SO       | HR       |
|---------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| K Oswald #12  | 3.2        | 6        | 9        | 4        | 2        | 2        | 0        |
| W Borg #1     | 1.1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>5.0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> |

**P-S:** W Borg 15-9, K Oswald 83-45, **HBP:** K Oswald 2, **BF:** W Borg 5, K Oswald 24, **E:** N Scepianiak, B Fliehs 2

| Sisseton Post 5...  | AB        | R        | H        | RBI      | BB       | SO       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| J Stickland #2 (3B) | 2         | 2        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| J Hamm #5           | 2         | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        |
| A Stickland #3 (SS) | 2         | 2        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| O Anderson #13 (C)  | 3         | 2        | 3        | 5        | 0        | 0        |
| I Deutsch #27 (2B)  | 3         | 1        | 2        | 1        | 0        | 0        |
| M Rempp #4 (1B)     | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| K Deutsch #18 (CF)  | 3         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| J Meyer #20 (LF)    | 3         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| A Chanku #6 (P)     | 3         | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| E Bult #21 (RF)     | 2         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2        |
| CR: L Nielsen #22   | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| <b>Totals</b>       | <b>25</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> |

**TB:** I Deutsch 2, O Anderson 3, J Hamm, J Stickland, **HBP:** J Hamm, A Stickland, **SB:** I Deutsch, A Stickland, A Chanku, M Rempp, J Stickland, **LOB:** 5

| Sisseton P... | IP         | H        | R         | ER       | BB        | SO       | HR       |
|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| A Chanku #6   | 2.2        | 4        | 6         | 4        | 9         | 2        | 0        |
| I Deutsch #27 | 2.1        | 2        | 4         | 2        | 1         | 3        | 0        |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>5.0</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>0</b> |

**P-S:** I Deutsch 49-26, A Chanku 75-25, **WP:** A Chanku, **HBP:** I Deutsch 2, **BF:** I Deutsch 13, A Chanku 21, **E:** E Bult, J Meyer



## 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.*



# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 10 of 74**



## **BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA GENERAL MEETING**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2026, 8:45 A.M.**

**COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS**

**COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
  - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes*
4. Chris Hemen, Weed & Pest Supervisor
  - a. Bid Opening for 4x4 Chassis or Flatbed Truck
5. Richmond Dam Update
6. Leif Redinger, Helms Engineering
  - a. Change Order #1 for Midland Contracting regarding Landfill Cell #5 Project
7. Fireworks Permit
  - a. Northern Plains Baptist Church at Richmond Lake Youth Camp/Bible Camp on June 26th
  - b. Bellino Fireworks for July 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brown County Speedway
8. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2026
  - b. Claims
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Travel Request
  - e. Zoning Ordinances – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising
  - f. Final Plats
    - i. Shirley Larson First Addition Plat
    - ii. Zemlicka Outlot Plat
9. Other Business
10. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
11. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311) - Access Code: **601-168-909** #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at** [Commission Meetings | Brown County](#)

---

## **BUDGET WORK SESSION/MEETINGS**

## Polyester Clothing & Microplastics In Our Bloodstreams

by Alexander Birk

Dear EarthTalk: Is it true that polyester clothing might be a significant factor in the microplastics in our bodies and bloodstreams?

-- Steve Wilson, New York, NY

Plastic in the 21st century can be described simply: ubiquitous. We see it in food packaging and water bottles, but it is also present in cosmetics and clothing. The invention of plastic in 1907 ushered in a new era of convenience. A story in Life magazine from 1955, "Throwaway Living," encouraged housewives to ditch chores and turn to single-use disposable kitchenware, and plastic use never looked back. In the past few decades, plastic production skyrocketed to 8.3 billion tons as of 2021; According to the United Nations, polyester production alone has increased 900 percent since 1980.

When reflecting on plastic pollution, co-founder of Stanford Medicine's Plastics and Health Working Group, Desiree LaBeaud, put it perfectly: "Plastic never goes away—it just breaks down into finer and finer particles." Polyester fibers are extreme offenders when it comes to shedding microplastics. The fibers from polyester and nylon easily travel through air and water making them difficult to avoid.

One shocking headline says that we consume a credit card's worth of plastic each week, while a less eye-catching article disputed that claim, estimating 23,000 years to ingest that amount. The reality of these vast differences is that there are no standardized methods to measure microplastics yet. When reviewing microplastics in 2022, The World Health Organization explained they could not come to a conclusion on their impact because of a lack of reliable data.

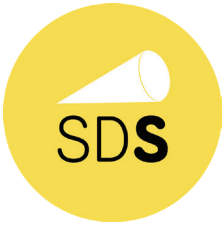
Nonetheless there is evidence that microplastics accumulate in the human body. We ingest it in our food and water, and it's in our air. Per the Chair of Environmental Toxicology at City University in Hong Kong, small enough particles can even enter the body through the skin; not something you want to hear while wearing a polyester shirt. Initial observations suggest that microplastics may negatively impact digestive, respiratory, endocrine, reproductive and immune systems.

This is mostly observed in nonhuman animals thus far. Kara Meister, who studies microplastics' roles in pediatric disease at Stanford Medicine says "probably within the next year or two we'll have a couple more big landmark papers [which will inform us on the impacts of microplastics in humans]." Meister urges people not to succumb to "doomsday" thinking because we have plastics in our bodies. She instead encourages people to live a healthy lifestyle with good sleep, diet and stress management, saying "Giving your body the best shot to deal with whatever might come along is the best you can do."

# EARTHTALK



**Some researchers think microplastics may be accumulating in your body if you wear a lot of polyester.** Credit: Pexels.com.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **COMMENTARY**

## **There's a disturbance in the force of South Dakota politics**

**Expectations and norms turned upside down in current campaigns**

**by Dana Hess**

If Obi-Wan Kenobi were here, he'd say he's feeling a great disturbance in the force. Fortunately it's not the planet killing kind of disturbance, but one that's shaking up politics in South Dakota. Traditions and norms we thought we could count on are being shattered. Political party members are turning against each other. Maybe it's the political end times.

One of the first inklings that something was wrong came when Gov. Larry Rhoden said he wouldn't participate in any debates against Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden. Doeden and Rhoden placed first and second in the June 2 Republican primary with neither receiving the 35% needed to win outright. They'll face off in an election on July 28.

Usually it's the second place finisher or the candidate who has less in his campaign coffers that pushes for more debates. Rhoden qualifies on both counts.

Doeden, who finished first, wants the debate. "If Larry Rhoden no longer wishes to participate in the electoral process, he should suspend his campaign so that those of us who are serious about doing the work of the people can move forward with uniting the party ahead of November," Doeden told The Dakota Scout.

Doeden is good at being pugnacious, but it's hard to see how a debate between those two candidates would unite the Republican Party. Also, there's nothing in the state constitution requiring Rhoden to participate in a debate. While debates are a traditional part of campaigns for office, they aren't an official part of the electoral process. And both Doeden and Rhoden and the other two candidates in the June 2 primary participated in three debates before that election.

While Doeden calls Rhoden's failure to debate him a reason for the governor to drop out of the race, some Democrats are making the same sort of plea to their candidate for the U.S. Senate. South Dakota Democrats, who usually have a tough time fielding candidates for any office, have one this year who will challenge Sen. Mike Rounds. But some in the party don't want him.

Some party activists and donors would rather throw their support to independent Brian Bengs. The independent ran as a Democrat in 2022 against Sen. John Thune. Eighteen months affiliated with the Democratic Party for that campaign was enough for Bengs. He's back to being an independent and doing well at it, raising more money than the Democratic candidate, Julian Beaudion.

Beaudion and Bengs are both long shots to unseat Rounds. A move to back Bengs over Beaudion may do more harm than good for the state's Democratic Party. It's already a chore for the party to find credible candidates. What's it going to say to future potential candidates if Democrats throw their support to someone who isn't in the party?

Party politics has come to loom over the nonpartisan race for mayor of Sioux Falls. Politics wasn't supposed to play a part in the runoff election between Christine Erickson, a Republican and former legislator, and Jamie Smith, a Democratic lawmaker and former candidate for governor.

The race got political when Doeden took offense when the two candidates who finished third and fourth — Republican state Rep. Greg Jamison and Joe Batcheller, also a Republican — offered their endorse-

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 13 of 74

ments to Smith instead of Erickson. The two men explained that their friendship with Smith ran deeper than party politics. That didn't keep Doeden from going full Trump on both of them.

Labeling the two men who endorsed Smith as "proven losers and petty politicians," Doeden disparaged Smith as a "radical-left wing legislator" and praised Erickson for her common sense.

So here we are in a political world turned upside down, something we're not used to in South Dakota. A nonpartisan race for mayor in the state's largest city has turned intensely political. A party with a checkered history finding candidates for office has some of its members lobbying to chuck its candidate for the U.S. Senate. An incumbent governor — facing an opponent with deep, deep pockets — has turned down the free air time that goes with participating in a political debate.

Not even Obi-Wan Kenobi could straighten out this mess.

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

## State board approves options for prenatal videos in schools, including one from anti-abortion group

**New South Dakota law passed earlier this year takes effect July 1**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER**

South Dakota schools will have multiple options for new state-required prenatal development videos — including one from an anti-abortion group.

South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden signed House Bill 1313 into law earlier this year, requiring public schools to show students "age-appropriate and research-based" videos. The law takes effect July 1.

Each video must be at least three minutes long, and each video or combination of videos must include two things: high-definition ultrasound footage showing brain, heart and organ development, and imagery tracing prenatal development from fertilization through birth. Videos from groups that perform or promote abortion are prohibited.

The South Dakota Board of Education Standards approved three videos Monday.

State Education Secretary Joe Graves said the department vetted all three videos for scientific accuracy before sending them to the board.

"Will there be a controversy somewhere? It's possible. But I don't see it being based on there being any inaccurate information in the videos," Graves said.

One is the three minute, 13-second "Baby Olivia" video, which has drawn criticism from medical professionals and abortion-rights groups, including for misaligning with how doctors date pregnancies. The video dates an embryo's age from conception, rather than the mother's last known period. The video comes from Live Action, an anti-abortion group, and has been the inspiration for similar legislation in other states.

"Baby Olivia" alone doesn't meet the law's two requirements and must be paired with a second video, said Shannon Malone, the department's director of learning and instruction. That second video, "How a Human Embryo Develops into a Fetus," is nearly four minutes long and produced by Encyclopedia Britannica. Both videos are available online for free.

The third video option, which covers both of the law's requirements, is the only recommendation that costs school districts money. It's a 42-minute DVD, "The Biology of Prenatal Development," produced in 2006 by the Endowment for Human Development and available from various sellers for up to \$29. The endowment describes itself as a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving health science education and public health.

"The DVD was obviously superior," board member Phyllis Heineman said.

Malone said the department will explore options to license and share the 42-minute video on its website.

School districts must confirm annually that they've met the requirement, Malone said. The school districts will also report which video or videos they used.

No members of the public spoke about the videos during the meeting. The state law describes the re-

quirements only as "age appropriate" and does not specify what age of students should watch the videos.

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

## More cuts could be coming to the agency that helps farmers protect the environment

**The Natural Resources Conservation Service helps conserve soil and water and fight climate change; advocates say those goals are in jeopardy**

**BY: EVA TESFAYE, WWNO**

NEW ORLEANS — River Queen Greens, as the name suggests, lies just outside of the levee blocking the Mississippi River, a 20-minute drive from downtown New Orleans. The farm produces certified naturally grown vegetables to sell to local restaurants and at farmers markets.

But summer is the farm's off-season, which means it's time for cover crops. One of the fields has already grown a lush crop of sunflowers that reach shoulder height.

"We get a huge amount of plant material over, like, two or three months, and it makes a really big difference. Every year we come back and the soil is so much improved in the fall," said Annie Moore, the farm's co-owner.

Cover crops go on the fields between plantings of the regular cash crop. They trap nutrients in the soil and help prevent weeds, so that the farm doesn't have to use chemical fertilizer or herbicides, saving money and reducing environmental impacts. They also hold more water in the soil and reduce erosion.

While cover crops have these long-term benefits, farmers don't sell them, so they don't make money off of them directly. This is why farms like River Queen Greens rely on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to pay for cover crop seeds.

But Moore said, in the last year, it's become harder for farmers in the New Orleans area to get help.

"For a brief shining moment, there was an NRCS representative in New Orleans," she said. "He was just part of the community here, which was really special to have that as a representative. And he was also very proactive about reaching out to us when there was some funding available."

NRCS offices across the country, including the one in New Orleans, were impacted by the Trump administration's sweeping federal cuts. The service lost more than 2,500 employees in the first six months of last year, according to a recent report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of the Inspector General.

More cuts could be coming. The USDA's next fiscal budget takes away about \$700 million from NRCS technical assistance which pays for staff. That means cutting another 3,000 employees.

In Louisiana, that would mean going from 37 full-time employees to just five for the entire state.

### Farmers push back

When word got around, more than 500 farmers signed onto a letter urging Congress and the Trump administration to prioritize USDA staffing.

"Farmers are used to really tightening their belt and saying, 'We will make do with less,'" said Rebecca Bartels, the executive director of Invest in Our Land, the organization that wrote the letter. "But when it comes to these staff members, these are not a nice-to-have. These are a need-to-have. They are our expert advisers that help us get through the kinds of headwinds that we have been facing for quite a while now."

Bartels said the One Big Beautiful Bill expanded and made permanent a lot of these conservation programs, but they still need people on the ground to implement them.

"It's one thing for something to be made into law, but then it actually has to be delivered, and these are the staff that deliver the programs," she said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 15 of 74

NRCS offices are one of the main ways that farmers get direct help from the USDA. Many of the staff are scientists and engineers, who not only process applications but also make sure farmers are putting in these practices correctly. They also answer questions such as how to deal with pests and weeds.

Stephen Logan, a farmer in Gillam, Louisiana, grows cotton, corn, soybeans and peanuts. He said his family's farm has been relying on NRCS's experts for generations. He also started introducing cover crops with their help and he said it's been critical to have people actually come out to the farm.

"They look at your cover crop. And then the next year during the summer, sometimes they come and look at the residue that's available and certify that, yes, that cover crop did increase organic matter or the amount of soil cover to reduce erosion from rainfall," he said.

"So you can't really have those programs and make them beneficial and not have personnel there to assist."

NRCS are also extremely popular with farmers. Every year, these programs are oversubscribed, meaning there are more applicants than funding. And Bartels worries about application processing and payments getting stalled.

"We saw two freezes on funding in 2025 alone and what we don't want is for farmers to become disillusioned with the government as a funding partner," she said.

Delays hurt farmers because they pay for practices first and then get reimbursed, only after NRCS has determined they put in the practice correctly. A government shutdown last year led to a delay in payment to River Queen Greens, said Moore.

"There was a month or two delay. We were supposed to have the NRCS come out," she said, "and they couldn't make it out because they weren't working."

## How conservation practices benefit the public

These programs not only improve farm productivity, but they also protect the environment and fight climate change.

In 2022, the agriculture sector was responsible for 11% of greenhouse gas emissions, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Anne Schechinger researches agriculture and climate at the Environmental Working Group. She said NRCS is the main way farmers get funding to do practices that reduce greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution.

"When you have less NRCS staff there to put less conservation practices on the landscape, this is really bad for the public since it reduces the benefits to water quality, air quality and the climate that we're getting from conservation programs," she said.

NRCS program pay for what the USDA calls "climate-smart" agriculture. For example, cover crops make soil more resilient to extreme weather and store carbon, keeping it out of the atmosphere.

In its notes on the proposed budget, the USDA says it is removing money for technical assistance so it can provide more money directly to farmers in the programs themselves.

"Secretary [Brooke] Rollins understands the array of mission critical positions and programs at the Department, and she will ensure that those areas, including NRCS, have the resources and personnel they need to continue serving the American people," a USDA spokesperson said in a written statement.

The agency's fate now depends on an agriculture appropriations bill. It puts about \$600 million back into NRCS technical assistance, which would mean a smaller staff cut.

*This story is a product of the Mississippi River Basin Ag & Water Desk, an independent reporting network based at the University of Missouri in partnership with Report for America, with major funding from the Walton Family Foundation.*

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

*Eva Tesfaye covers the environment for WWNO's Coastal Desk. Before joining WWNO, she reported for Harvest Public Media and the Mississippi River Basin Ag & Water Desk. She was based at KCUR 89.3 in Kansas City,*

*Missouri, where she covered agriculture, food and the environment across the Mississippi River Basin. Eva was also a producer for NPR's daily science podcast Short Wave. A graduate of Columbia University, she started her journalism career as an NPR Kroc Fellow. She grew up moving around Africa and has lived in Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa and Kenya.*

## Trump 'trampled' voter privacy by feeding info into Homeland Security system, judge says

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

The Trump administration illegally overhauled a U.S. Department of Homeland Security computer program in its hunt for noncitizen voters, a judge ruled Monday in a stinging decision that laid into federal officials for violating the privacy of millions of Americans.

The ruling struck at the core of President Donald Trump's project to assert authority over state-run elections ahead of the November midterms. Under Trump's control, the executive branch has spent the past year attempting to obtain state voter rolls to feed into the computer program, called Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE.

U.S. District Judge Sparkle Sooknanan, a President Joe Biden appointee for a district court based in Washington, D.C., condemned the Trump administration's behavior over 75 pages and vacated a series of notices Homeland Security had published to implement the computer program.

"All in all, the federal government has knowingly trampled on the privacy rights of American citizens in a manner that threatens the sacred right to vote," Sooknanan wrote. "This Court cannot stand idly by while that happens."

Sooknanan's decision, if upheld, could hamper the administration's ability to implement an executive order aimed at restricting voting by mail. The order requires Homeland Security to compile lists of voting-age citizens in each state using information from SAVE, along with other federal databases.

Homeland Security has long operated SAVE, but prior to the second Trump administration it was primarily a tool to check whether individual immigrants were eligible for various government benefits. Last year, the agency reconfigured SAVE to allow for simultaneous searches of millions of names and allowed states to upload their voter rolls for the purpose of identifying possible noncitizens.

While some Republican-led states took Homeland Security up on the offer, most states have resisted demands to turn over their voter rolls to the Trump administration. In turn, the U.S. Department of Justice has sued 30 states for unredacted copies of their voter rolls, including sensitive personal data such as driver's license and Social Security numbers.

The Justice Department has been unsuccessful in forcing states to provide the information. DOJ attorneys have indicated that any data would be shared with Homeland Security for analysis by SAVE.

"It's amazing how hard the Left will fight to stop us from solving problems they insist do not exist. Judge Sparkle Sooknanan's latest ruling preventing DHS from addressing alien voting is just the latest example!" Homeland Security General Counsel James Percival wrote on social media.

If Homeland Security appeals the decision, federal officials face a shrinking window to restore their ability to use SAVE before the midterms. Federal law prohibits sweeping purges of voters less than 90 days before federal elections — in this case early August ahead of November.

Pamela Smith, president and CEO of Verified Voting, a group that advocates for the "responsible use of technology in elections," acknowledged election officials are in a moment of uncertainty.

"The closer we get to the midterms, it raises your blood pressure," Smith said in an interview. "But I think most people are (saying), 'well, we just have to wait and see.'"

### Concerns from Dems, voting groups

Democrats and voting rights groups have warned about the dangers of SAVE, saying it makes errors and has wrongly flagged citizens. They hailed Monday's decision as a victory for voters.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 17 of 74**

"Efforts to create a federal voter database to facilitate voter purges threaten the fundamental right at the heart of our democracy," Marcia Johnson, chief of activation and justice for the League of Women Voters, said in a statement.

Sooknanan came to a similar conclusion in her decision, writing that federal agencies "haphazardly combined and repurposed the private information of millions of Americans, including citizenship data that they knew to be unreliable."

The judge pointed to sworn declarations by four naturalized citizens that Texas had threatened to revoke their voter registrations because of inaccurate Social Security data contained in the SAVE system. At least three citizens had their registrations revoked for at least some time.

The Trump administration didn't dispute the sworn testimony, Sooknanan noted. The administration also didn't contest, she wrote, the findings of an independent investigation that found that 25% of possible noncitizens identified by SAVE in Travis County, Texas, which includes Austin, were people who had already proven their U.S. citizenship.

The judge's ruling came in a lawsuit filed against Homeland Security and other federal agencies last September by the League of Women Voters and the Electronic Privacy Information Center that challenged the repurposed SAVE system.

"As the Trump-Vance administration continues its attack on the right to vote, this is an important victory for the American people and our democracy," Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, said in a statement.

Democracy Forward Foundation, along with Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and Fair Elections Center, represented the groups challenging the directive.

## Three violations

The SAVE system violated federal law in three primary ways, Sooknanan wrote.

First, it breached a ban on the Social Security Administration against disclosing Social Security numbers and related records. Second, it violated the federal Privacy Act, which restricts how the federal government shares information. And third, it violated the federal Administrative Procedure Act, which governs how federal agencies set policy.

The record in the lawsuit "shows that the federal agencies that created this database knew that the database violates those statutory protections," the judge wrote.

## Decision preempted expansion

Before Monday's decision, the agency was planning to expand the use of SAVE.

CNN reported hours earlier that the agency later this summer planned to require states to run their voter rolls through SAVE as a condition of receiving full homeland security grant funding.

Under the planned changes, states could also lose at least some funding if they don't offer plans to move voting toward hand-marked paper ballots. Those changes could affect all voters in Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, New Jersey, Nevada and South Carolina, nearly all voters in Arkansas and Indiana, and roughly two-thirds of voters in Tennessee, according to data from Verified Voting.

Homeland Security didn't dispute the report when asked about it by States Newsroom. In a statement, the department emphasized Secretary Markwayne Mullin's focus on election security.

"Under President Trump and Secretary Mullin, DHS and FEMA are committed to ensuring homeland security grant funding advances core national security priorities, to include the security and integrity of our nation's election infrastructure," the statement says, referring to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, an agency within Homeland Security.

"Any recipient of federal funding should expect accountability for how taxpayer dollars are spent."

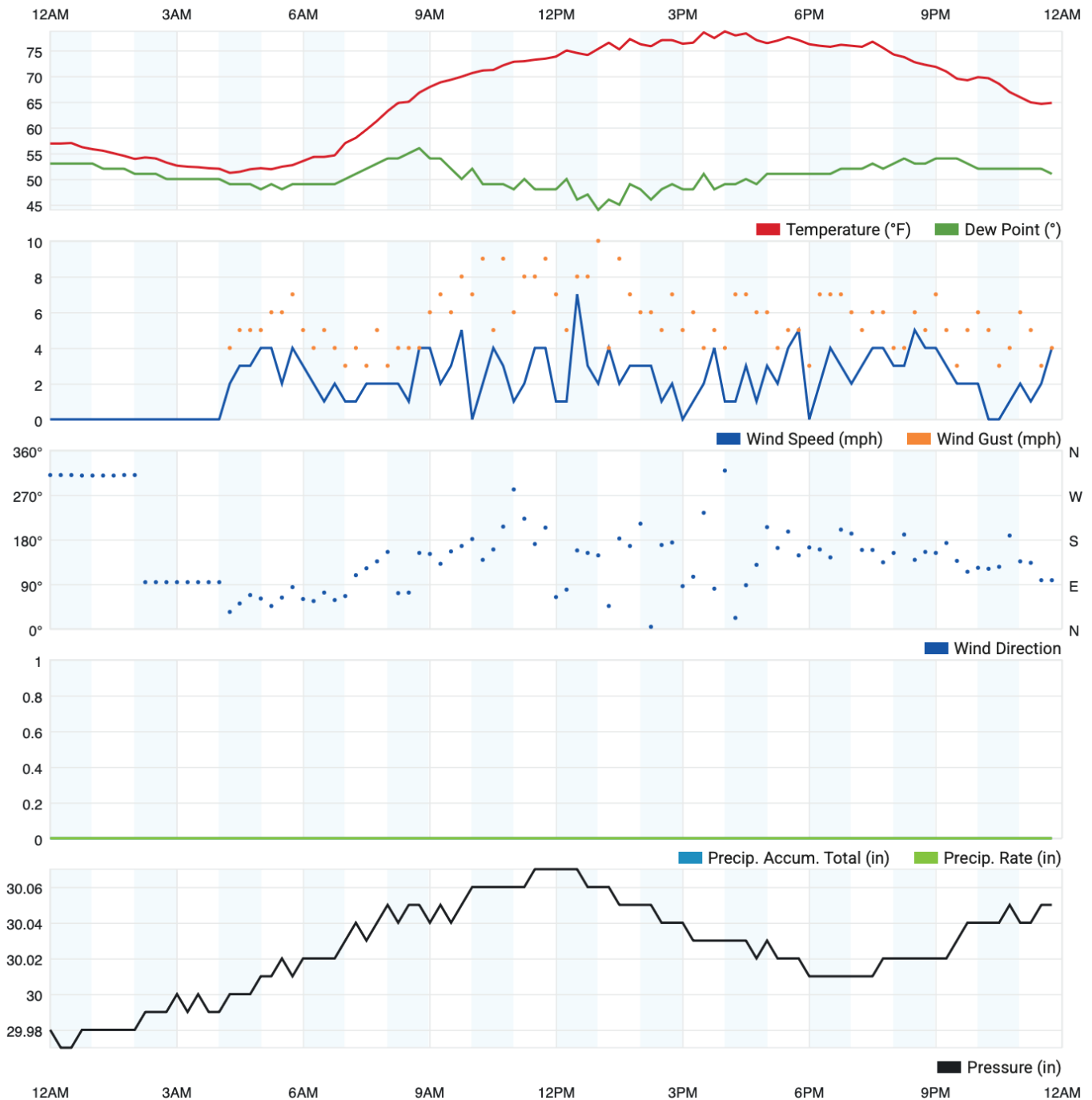
*Jonathan Shorman covers democracy for States Newsroom. Based in Kansas City, his coverage area includes elections and voting rights, fights over state and federal power, civil liberties and more. An alumnus of the University of Kansas, he previously covered politics for The Kansas City Star.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 18 of 74

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

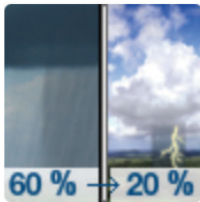
June 22, 2026



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 19 of 74

Tuesday



High: 80 °F

Showers  
Likely then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms

Tuesday Night



Low: 52 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 75 °F

Increasing  
Clouds

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 49 °F

Partly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 76 °F

Mostly Sunny



## Rain & Storm Timing Today

June 23, 2026  
3:31 AM CDT

- Isolated severe storms possible this afternoon east of a line from Eureka through Highmore and Vivian.
- The **primary threat for severe thunderstorms will be this afternoon** (1 to 8 PM) - lingering longest over far eastern SD and west central MN.



- A few storms will be capable of producing hail of 1" in diameter and/or winds gusting to around 60 mph



- Timing of highest risk for severe storms is highlighted in the **red boxes**

### Probability of Precipitation (%) Forecast

|             | 6/23<br>Tue |     |     |     |      |      |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|             | 6am         | 7am | 8am | 9am | 10am | 11am | 12pm | 1pm | 2pm | 3pm | 4pm | 5pm | 6pm | 7pm | 8pm | 9pm |
| McIntosh    | 50          | 5   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Eagle Butte | 50          | 15  | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Murdo       | 60          | 45  | 30  | 30  | 10   | 10   | 10   | 5   | 5   | 0   | 5   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Mobridge    | 50          | 25  | 5   | 0   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Pierre      | 60          | 45  | 30  | 20  | 10   | 10   | 5    | 5   | 5   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Gettysburg  | 50          | 40  | 25  | 5   | 5    | 5    | 5    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Eureka      | 50          | 30  | 10  | 0   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Chamberlain | 80          | 75  | 45  | 25  | 20   | 20   | 15   | 20  | 20  | 15  | 10  | 5   | 5   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Miller      | 65          | 55  | 40  | 40  | 25   | 20   | 20   | 20  | 15  | 10  | 5   | 5   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Redfield    | 60          | 55  | 45  | 30  | 20   | 20   | 20   | 20  | 15  | 10  | 5   | 5   | 5   | 0   | 5   | 5   |
| Aberdeen    | 60          | 55  | 60  | 35  | 20   | 20   | 20   | 15  | 15  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Britton     | 30          | 50  | 70  | 65  | 40   | 30   | 30   | 30  | 30  | 10  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 5   | 5   |
| Clark       | 50          | 65  | 80  | 45  | 40   | 45   | 45   | 50  | 50  | 45  | 25  | 15  | 10  | 0   | 10  | 5   |
| Webster     | 40          | 55  | 75  | 65  | 60   | 55   | 55   | 50  | 45  | 40  | 20  | 10  | 10  | 0   | 5   | 5   |
| Watertown   | 30          | 50  | 70  | 70  | 55   | 55   | 50   | 50  | 50  | 55  | 50  | 25  | 10  | 10  | 10  | 5   |
| Sisseton    | 15          | 40  | 60  | 80  | 80   | 65   | 55   | 60  | 50  | 40  | 25  | 15  | 10  | 5   | 5   | 5   |
| Milbank     | 10          | 35  | 65  | 80  | 60   | 65   | 65   | 60  | 60  | 60  | 45  | 35  | 20  | 10  | 10  | 5   |
| Wheaton     | 5           | 30  | 50  | 70  | 85   | 80   | 60   | 75  | 70  | 65  | 55  | 35  | 25  | 15  | 15  | 10  |

Storms will move across the region during the morning hours. Severe weather is not anticipated with this wave of convection. Additional thunderstorm activity is expected to develop in the heat of the afternoon. There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 of 5) for severe weather, with an isolated stronger storm or two may produce hail to the size of quarters and wind gusts of 60 mph over eastern South Dakota into western Minnesota.

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

### HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:  
Isolated Severe Storms  
Possible

1 PM to 8 PM CT  
this afternoon

### PRIMARY THREATS



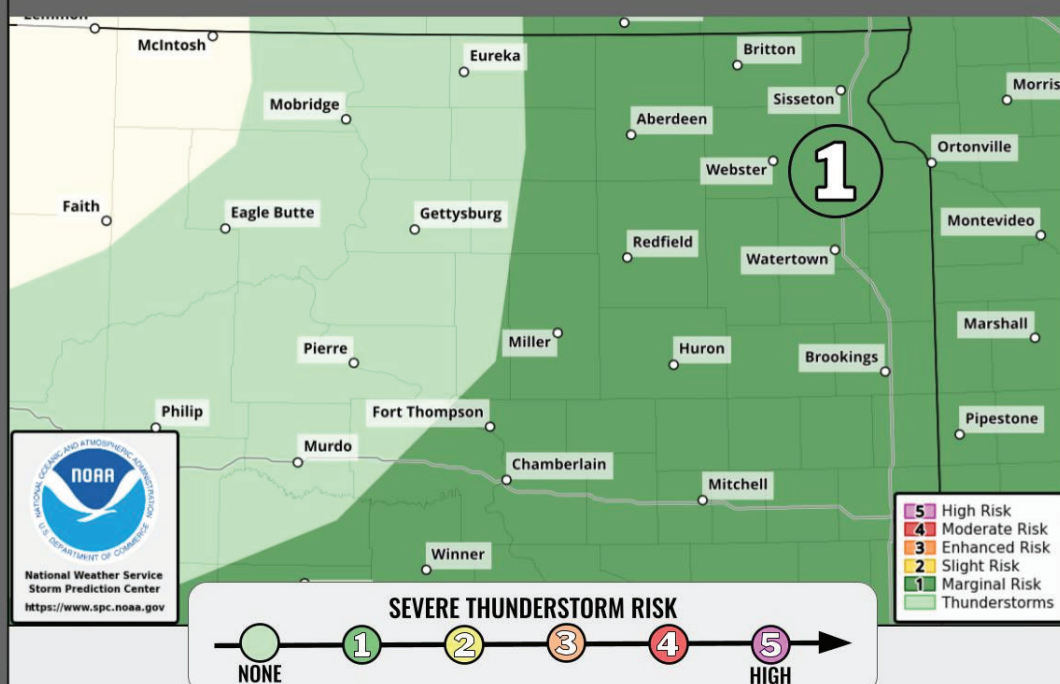
DAMAGING  
WIND  
GUSTS  
of 60 mph



LARGE HAIL  
of 1" in  
diameter

NWS Aberdeen, SD

## Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Today



Showers and scattered thunderstorms are expected today. Isolated severe storms possible this afternoon east of a line from Eureka through Highmore and Vivian. The primary threat for severe thunderstorms will be this afternoon (1 to 8 PM) - lingering longest over far eastern SD and west central MN. A few storms will be capable of producing hail of 1" in diameter and/or winds gusting to around 60 mph.



## Radar Outage

### Where:

The WSR-88D at the National Weather Service Office in [Aberdeen, SD \(KABR\)](#).

### What:

The Radar currently inoperable due to equipment failure. Technicians are working on the issue. The time to restoration is unknown at this time.

### Additional Options

Alternative options include Radars at: Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Bismarck, Minneapolis and/or Grand Forks.

June 23, 2026

12:23 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 21 of 74

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 79 °F at 4:27 PM**

**Low Temp: 51 °F at 4:19 AM**

**Wind: 10 mph at 11:37 AM**

**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1911

Record Low: 33 in 1942

Average High: 82

Average Low: 57

Average Precip in June.: 2.83

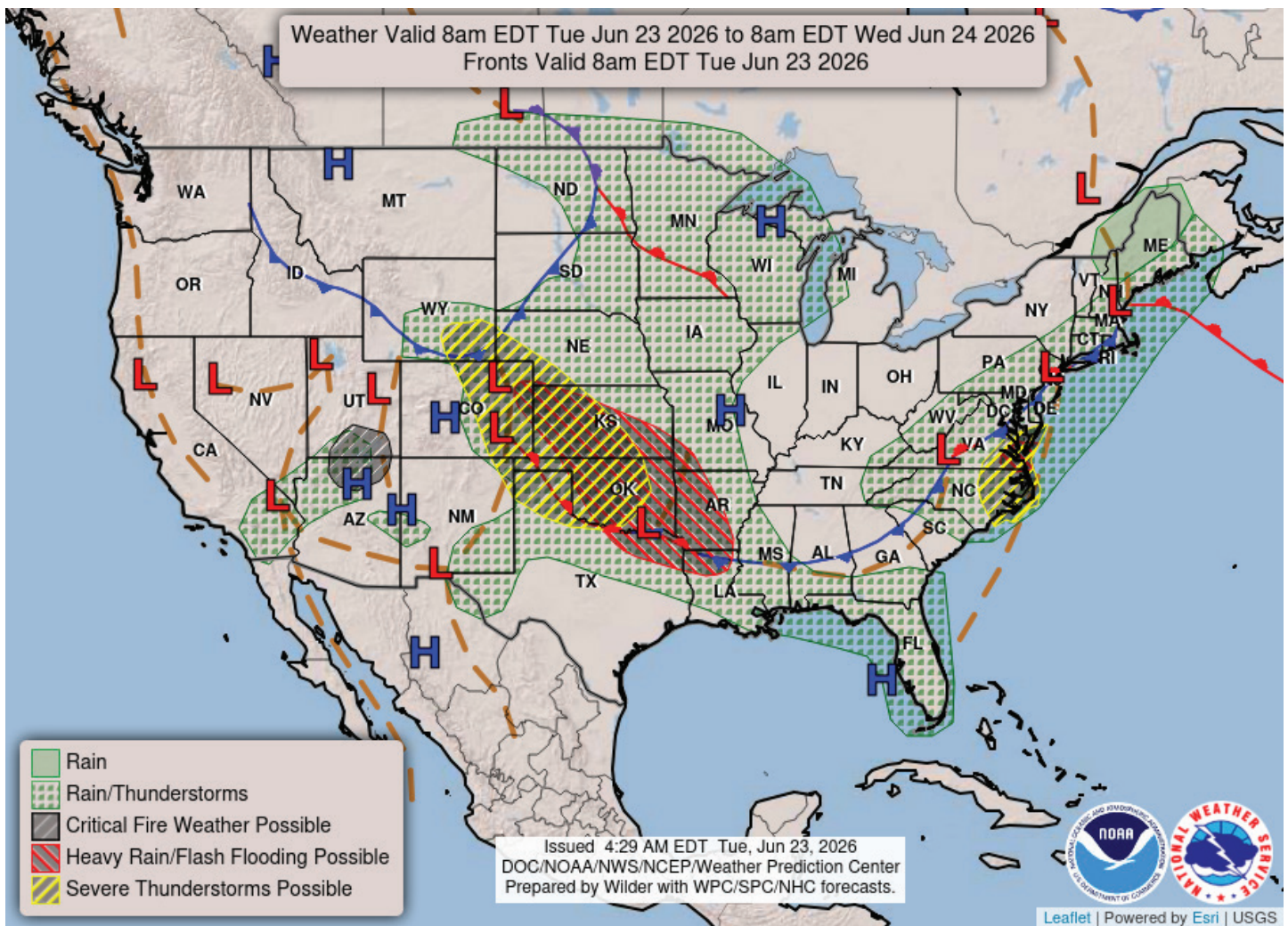
Precip to date in June.: 1.37

Average Precip to date: 10.08

Precip Year to Date: 8.13

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44 am



# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 22 of 74**

## Today in Weather History

June 23rd, 1914: A destructive, estimated F3 tornado moved east across Altamont Township in Brown County. All buildings on at least four farms were destroyed. A man was killed trying to keep his family from being blown out of a shallow cellar.

Another storm moved east from the southeastern part of Watertown to north of Goodwin. Over 200 homes were heavily damaged in Watertown by an estimated F2 tornado and downburst winds. Barns were destroyed on three farms east of Watertown. The estimated cost was \$200,000.

June 23rd, 2002: During the evening, a powerful supercell thunderstorm produced six tornados from eastern McPherson County and across northern Brown County. The first tornado to touchdown was a brief F0 and occurred 6.4 miles northeast of Leola and resulted in no damage. The second tornado was an F1 and touched down 8.5 miles northeast of Leola and crossed over into Brown County, where it dissipated 9 miles northwest of Barnard. This tornado brought down many trees and a barn and caused damage to the siding and the roof of a farmhouse in McPherson County. A third weak satellite F0 tornado occurred following the dissipation of the second tornado and resulted in no damage. A fourth, stronger F3 tornado developed 6 miles west of Barnard and moved east before dissipating 3 miles southeast of Barnard. This tornado brought down some high-power lines and a support tower and tossed a pickup truck 100 yards into a group of trees. The pickup truck was totaled. The tornado caused extensive damage to two farmhouses, several farm buildings, and farm equipment. One farmhouse lost the garage and had many trees completely snapped off down low and debarked. The fifth tornado developed 5 miles southeast of Barnard and became a violent F4 tornado. This tornado caused damage to one farmhouse, several outbuildings, trees, and equipment as it moved northeast and strengthened. The tornado completely demolished two unoccupied homes and several outbuildings, destroying or damaging some farm equipment before dissipating 7.6 miles northeast of Barnard. The sixth tornado was a weak satellite F0, which occurred with this violent tornado and caused no damage. The F4 tornado was the first recorded in Brown County and one of the few recorded in South Dakota. The total estimated property loss exceeded a million dollars.

1902 — The temperature at Volcano Springs, CA, soared to 129 degrees to set a June record for the U.S. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1944 — Four tornadoes killed 153 persons and caused five million dollars damage in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland. The tornadoes formed during the evening and moved southeast along parallel paths flattening everything in their way. The town of Shinnston WV was leveled, and was left with the majority of the casualties. Until that time it was believed that damaging tornadoes did not travel across mountainous terrain. (David Ludlum)

1957 — A few miles west of Fort Stockton TX, softball size hail injured 21 persons unable to find shelter, mostly farm laborers. Some livestock were killed. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A massive hailstorm hit eastern Colorado causing an estimated 60 to 70 million dollars damage. At La Junta, CO, hail as large as softballs caused 37 million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Thirty-four cities reported record high temperatures for the date. The reading of 90 degrees at Bluefield, WV, equalled their record for the month of June. The record high of 104 degrees at Billings, MT, was their thirteenth of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Six cities in the High Plains Region reported record low temperatures for the date, including Sheridan, WY, with a reading of 38 degrees. Showers and thunderstorms in the eastern U.S. deluged New Castle County, DE, with 2.5 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

## God Is Present in Dark Times

**The path through suffering begins with trust, not understanding.**

**Believe God is always working for your good.**

Genesis 39:1-23: 1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

3 Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.

5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.

6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.

9 "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.

12 She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,

14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.

15 "When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside."

16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.

17 Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me;

18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned.

20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

*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*

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 24 of 74**

21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it.

23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

As Christians, we have a heavenly Father who promises to be with us in our struggles and is completely reliable. He knows what will happen before we do; nothing is hidden from His sight (Hebrews 4:13). God sees in the darkness of troubled times as clearly as in the daylight (Psalms 139:11-12). Through His Spirit, He offers us the comfort, strength, and wisdom to persevere.

The story of Joseph vividly illustrates this truth. After being sold into slavery by his brothers, he was falsely accused by his master's wife and imprisoned. But in the midst of those terrible times, the young man experienced God's presence and favor.

Joseph probably did not fully comprehend the Lord's intentions. But later, as second-in-command to Pharaoh, he understood God's purpose in allowing those difficult years. In the end, Joseph testified to what he knew to be true: His brothers had meant to harm him, but God used all the hardship to accomplish His good plan (Genesis 45:4-8; Genesis 50:20).

When troubles hit, remember what is true and take heart. The indwelling Holy Spirit has the resources to provide what we need, equip us for any challenge, and sustain us with His presence throughout the dark days. Nothing can stop the purposes of our Lord from being carried out (Isaiah 14:27).

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 25 of 74

## The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- ☐ Black & White.....\$52.00/year
- ☐ Colored.....\$80.00/year
- ☐ Colored.....\$49.00/6 months
- ☐ E-Weekly\*.....\$35.00/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- ☐ 1 Month.....\$16.00
- ☐ 3 Months.....\$28.00
- ☐ 6 Months.....\$38.00
- ☐ 9 Months.....\$52.00
- ☐ 12 Months.....\$60.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 26 of 74



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.22.26

7 8 20 24 42 5

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 1 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.19.26

13 16 21 26 50 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$467,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 46 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.22.26

12 13 35 41 52 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$30,460,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 1 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.20.26

2 9 15 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$145,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 16 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.22.26

18 41 43 64 65 25

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 45 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.22.26

17 19 21 45 48 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$327,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 45 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 27 of 74

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **A red alert over France, and heat that may rewrite the record books**

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Millions of people across France woke up drenched in sweat on Tuesday after another night of scorching heat, with most of the population exposed to extreme and exceptional temperatures, while 40 people died from drowning over the past five days in the country.

Temperatures will remain exceptionally high around the clock as the national weather service, Meteo France, placed 54 departments under a red heat wave alert. That is about half of the country.

French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said after a crisis meeting that the 40 people who died by drowning since June 18 were mainly young people.

In a country without widespread air-conditioning, schools, trains and sporting events remain impacted.

Human-caused climate change is tied to increasingly extreme weather, and U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years should shatter more heat records.

"Sunshine continues to dominate across France, maintaining oppressive and exhausting heat throughout the country," Meteo France said. Extreme conditions are expected to last at least until the end of the week, with daytime highs above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in many towns.

"Further record-breaking temperatures are expected, including some that could surpass all previous records, regardless of the time of year," Meteo France said.

The heat wave is exceptionally intense, coming very early in the summer, "but with a still uncertain duration," the weather service said. It has already been compared to the August 2003 heat wave, when the highest temperatures in over half a century caused an estimated 15,000 deaths, many of them among older people in apartments and retirement homes without air conditioning.

France introduced a heat watch warning system after that heat wave.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing twice as fast as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Over the last four years, more than 200,000 people across Europe died from heat-related causes, and most of those deaths were preventable, the World Health Organization's Europe office said this month. The above-average temperatures can cause heat exhaustion and life-threatening heat stroke.

Heat waves hits Britain

Across the English Channel, the Met Office issued a red extreme heat warning for Wednesday and Thursday, with forecasts suggesting June's all-time daily temperature record could be broken.

Temperatures of around 37°C (98.6 F) are expected in southern England, with up to 35°C (95 F) in southeast Wales. The peak of the heatwave is now forecast for Wednesday and Thursday, when highs could reach at least 39°C (102.2 F). Conditions are expected to ease by Friday, the weather agency said.

The EU monitoring agency found that in Europe and globally, 2024 was the hottest year on record and the continent experienced its second-highest number of "heat stress" days.

Scientists warn that climate change is exacerbating the frequency and intensity of heat and dryness, especially in southeastern Europe, making the region more vulnerable to health impacts and wildfires.

### **Iran's president heads to Pakistan as US-Iran teams work to finalize a war-ending deal**

By MUNIR AHMED, DAVID RISING and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Iran's president was traveling to Pakistan for talks Tuesday with officials who have been mediating negotiations between Tehran and Washington on a permanent end to the war in the Middle East, even as discrepancies were emerging on what had been agreed so far and violence broke

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 28 of 74**

out again in Lebanon.

President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Islamabad comes as technical teams were working on details of the deal, following high-level negotiations in Switzerland on Monday led by US Vice President JD Vance and Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf.

In Tehran, Iran's capital, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told reporters that no visits have been scheduled for the U.N. watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency — to see Iranian nuclear sites bombed by the United States last year. Vance had previously said the negotiations in Switzerland won an agreement for IAEA to inspect the sites.

The IAEA has been in and out of Iran since Israel's 12-day war against Iran in 2025, but has not been granted access to the bombed enrichment sites targeted by the U.S. in that war.

Violence flared again in southern Lebanon, threatening the fragile ceasefire there, as Israeli soldiers opened fire in the town of Nabatiyeh al-Fawqa on Tuesday, killing two men, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported. It said the men were next to a bulldozer that was working to clear the road at the time.

Separately, the agency said Israeli troops fired on residents on the outskirts of the town of Hadatha as they were heading to carry out a burial in the town's ceremony with a Lebanese army escort.

Any renewal of heavy fighting could also threaten the broader diplomatic talks, since Iran has demanded that a full ceasefire in Lebanon be part of any comprehensive deal.

There was no immediate comment from Israel on the reports.

Iran's president makes his first visit to Islamabad since war started

Security was tight in the area of Islamabad where the Iranian president was to meet with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. It's Pezeshkian's first visit since the conflict started with the U.S. and Israeli attack on Iran on Feb. 28.

Pezeshkian and Sharif were to hold joint news conference after their discussions.

In the initial talks, marking the start of a 60-day diplomatic process that seeks to reach a permanent deal to end the Iran war, Iran and the U.S. agreed to create a "de-confliction cell" to address the fighting in Lebanon between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group. The U.S. said negotiators also discussed "mechanisms" to ensure the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for the transit of oil that Iran had effectively blocked during the war, remains open.

Ahead of his meetings in Pakistan, Pezeshkian cautioned that "the effectiveness of the talks depends on full commitment to the agreed obligations and their precise implementation."

"Progress on this path will be measured by practical adherence to accepted responsibilities," he wrote on X. "Statements outside the agreed text do not help advance the negotiations."

Iran says negotiation groups focused on sanctions relief, nuclear issues and more

Iran suggested the ongoing technical talks in Switzerland have led to the creation of specific negotiation groups, which include those focused on sanctions relief, nuclear issues, reconstruction and monitoring, according to a the state-run IRNA news agency.

The report quoted Kazem Gharibabadi, a deputy foreign minister leading the technical talks, saying that the countries involved also formed a contact mechanism over ships moving through the Strait of Hormuz and over the fighting in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah.

It remains unclear whether the de-confliction cell being created will be enough to stop fighting between the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israel, which occupies part of Lebanon and insists it must maintain a free hand to attack militants launching attacks into northern Israel.

Discrepancy on Iran's use of unfrozen funds

Following the high-level talks in Switzerland, Vance had said if Iranian financial assets were unfrozen they would be used to buy American-grown food.

Vance said that the U.S. and Qatar would have approval over the process, but if Iranian money becomes accessible as sanctions are lifted, it "would actually go to buy American soy, American corn and American wheat for the benefit of the Iranian people."

However, Iran has no current demand for U.S. crops and Baghaei said on Tuesday that Tehran's decisions

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 29 of 74**

on what to import would be based upon "prices and quality."

"It is interesting that the philosophy and goal of the war, which was the destruction of the Iranian civilization and the collapse of Iran, has become enriching American farmers," Baghaei said at the news conference in Tehran.

Iran's ambassador in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, also questioned Vance's contention that the U.S. and Qatar would have to approve how Iran uses unfrozen funds.

"Iran is the only country who decides what to do with those assets," he told reporters.

Netanyahu raises new questions over fragile Lebanon ceasefire

Mediators Pakistan and Qatar said the cell would include the Lebanese government and would "ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon," but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu raised new questions late on Monday, saying his military still has "full freedom of action to thwart any direct or emerging threat to them or to the residents of the north."

Neither Israel nor Hezbollah are signatories to the U.S.-Iran deal, and Netanyahu has vowed to keep his forces in southern Lebanon until any threat to Israel is eliminated. Hezbollah has refused to halt attacks unless Israel commits to withdrawing.

When asked about Netanyahu's comments, U.S. President Donald Trump later said "we're going to take a look at it," adding that he wouldn't say what action he would take but that the situation would "get solved."

"I'm a problem solver, I get problems solved real fast, including with Bibi," he said, using a nickname for Netanyahu.

The reports of Tuesday's deadly violence in Lebanon came after two days of calm following a ceasefire brokered on Saturday. No Israeli airstrikes or shelling have been reported since Sunday, and Hezbollah also has not claimed any attacks in what has been the longest halt in the fighting since the latest Israel-Hezbollah war erupted on March 2.

Lebanon and Israel planned another round of direct talks in Washington on Tuesday, which are expected to focus on developing a plan for an Israeli withdrawal.

## **Global shares mostly slip amid caution about the war in Iran**

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares mostly declined on Tuesday as recent enthusiasm cooled and markets faced uncertainty about efforts to end the war in Iran.

France's CAC 40 dipped 1.0% in early trading to 8,313.86, while the German DAX fell 1.6% to 24,746.63. Britain's FTSE 100 declined 0.6% to 10,379.26. U.S. shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures down 0.7% at 51,774.00. S&P 500 futures fell 1.5% to 7,429.25.

Earlier in Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 3.6% to finish at 69,788.38.

"We've had eight days of strong markets," said Neil Newman, head of strategy at Astris Advisory Japan. "Now it has cooled off a bit."

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was down 0.3% at 8,787.00. South Korea's Kospi tumbled 10.0% decline to 8,203.84, dropping from previous record highs due to a sell-off in major technology issues. Signs of greater regulatory scrutiny in the country's semiconductor sector also added to the hand-wringing.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 1.8% to 23,336.28, while the Shanghai Composite shed 1.4% to 4,106.25.

In the oil market, prices fell following talks over the weekend between the United States and Iran on their war. U.S. Vice President JD Vance said they created a "good foundation for a successful final deal."

An end to the war could open the Strait of Hormuz for oil tankers and allow for the full resumption of deliveries from the Persian Gulf. Iran's military said Saturday that it had closed the strait again, though U.S. Central Command has disputed that.

On Tuesday, benchmark U.S. crude fell 73 cents to \$73.58 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 43 cents to \$77.47 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged down to 161.43 Japanese yen from 161.52 yen. The euro cost \$1.1407, down from \$1.1431.

## Andy Burnham prepares for a UK Labour leadership contest that may be a coronation

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Andy Burnham, Britain's newest lawmaker and likely its next prime minister, was meeting Labour colleagues on Tuesday in preparation for a leadership contest in which he may be the only contender.

Burnham is the strong front-runner to replace Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who announced Monday that he will step down within weeks after two years in office marred by missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with party and public.

Burnham, a former Cabinet minister who served since 2017 as mayor of Greater Manchester, won a special election last week for a seat in Parliament with the express aim of challenging Starmer for the leadership.

Burnham's chances got a big boost on Monday when former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who was considered his main rival, announced his support.

Britain's parliamentary system allows governing parties to change leaders — and thus prime ministers — without the need for a national election. The next general election does not have to be held until 2029.

Nominations for the Labour leadership will open July 9 and close a week later. If Burnham is the only contender, he could be prime minister by July 17. If there is a contest, the winner should be in place by the time Parliament returns from its summer break on Sept. 1.

Burnham's economic plans are not yet known

Burnham was a popular mayor of Manchester, overseeing a period of rapid regeneration for the city where the Industrial Revolution was forged, and has pledged to repeat his signature brand of "Manchesterism" on a national scale.

Many Labour members hope Burnham's people skills and charisma can connect with the public more than the stolid, managerial Starmer could ever do.

But his policies in many areas are unknown and untested. Some Labour lawmakers want to see a party election contest where he would face public debate and scrutiny.

Burnham is expected to make a speech next week outlining some of his economic plans.

Former Armed Forces Minister Al Carns, who quit this month to protest what he saw as inadequate defense spending, said "we need to have a clear and concise discussion about what this country wants to be."

He has suggested he might run for the leadership but told broadcaster ITV that "I'm not ready to make a decision on this in any way, shape or form."

Others have suggested Darren Jones, a senior Cabinet minister and Starmer ally, should run, though he has yet to comment.

Potential candidates need the support of at least 81 Labour lawmakers, a fifth of the parliamentary party, to run.

Many argue that a leadership contest will only focus attention on the party's internal divisions and extend a period of political uncertainty.

"I think the transition should be swift and orderly," Cabinet Office Minister Nick Thomas-Symonds told the BBC.

Starmer won a landslide but stumbled in office

Starmer resigned on Monday after a weekend considering his future, acknowledging that the Labour Party no longer thinks "I am best placed to lead us into the next general election."

He was the sixth prime minister in a decade to stand outside No. 10 Downing St. and announce a departure. It comes as Britain marks the 10th anniversary of its vote to leave the European Union, a decision that still roils the country's economy and politics.

After weeks of insisting he would fight to keep his job, Starmer conceded to growing pressure to hand over to a new leader who can try and revive the government's flagging fortunes. He led Labour to a landslide election victory in July 2024, but since then his popularity and that of the party have plummeted.

Starmer has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 31 of 74**

the cost of living. He has been hamstrung by repeated missteps, including his decision to appoint Peter Mandelson, a scandal-tarnished friend of Jeffrey Epstein, as U.K. ambassador to the United States.

Labour is losing liberal voters to the growing Green Party and facing a rising Reform UK, the Nigel Farage-led anti-immigration party that consistently leads in nationwide opinion polls.

## **Turkey detains 209 in raids in the capital of Ankara ahead of July's NATO summit**

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Security forces in the Turkish capital carried out sweeping raids on Tuesday ahead of next month's NATO summit, and detained more than 200 people with suspected links to extremist groups, including the Islamic State group.

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to join other leaders of the 32-member alliance in Ankara for the July 7–8 summit.

Turkey is planning strict security measures for the summit, including banning demonstrations and restricting access to roads leading to airports, as well as sealing off areas around the summit venue and hotels hosting delegations.

The government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has prioritized security and authorities regularly carry out security raids. Last month, security forces detained 324 people suspected of links to the Islamic State group in a nationwide sweep.

Early on Tuesday, Turkish prosecutors issued detention orders for 241 suspects, and 209 of them were subsequently taken into custody in police and gendarmerie raids around Ankara, according to a statement from the chief prosecutor's office. The raids were still underway later Tuesday to take in the rest of the suspects.

Among those detained were 56 alleged Islamic State militants and 35 members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, a far-left group known for armed attacks and assassinations in Turkey.

The Islamic State group has also carried out numerous deadly attacks in Turkey, including the 2017 New Year's Eve shooting at an Istanbul nightclub that killed 39 people.

## **How Brexit broke British politics**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Brexit fractured the European Union, and broke British politics.

The U.K. is about to get its seventh prime minister since June 23, 2016, a decade ago Tuesday, when the country voted 52%-48% to leave the EU after more than four decades of membership. Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, who called the referendum but campaigned for the U.K. to stay in the bloc, quit the next day.

His successors have all grappled, largely unsuccessfully, with the consequences of that rupture. The latest is Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who announced Monday that he was stepping down after two years of a sluggish economy, malfunctioning government and a divided and jaded electorate — all legacies, at least in part, of Brexit.

Though the decision has faded from headlines, "the subterranean trace of Brexit" still runs through Britain's increasingly unruly politics, said Chris Grey, an academic who has studied the fallout from Britain's EU departure.

The Brexit campaign channeled discontent

Campaigners for Brexit promised that leaving the then-28 member political and economic bloc would let the U.K. "take back control" of its laws, economy and borders.

While the "remain" campaign focused largely on the economic downsides of exiting, the "leave" side was emotive.

"We can see the sunlit meadows beyond. I believe we would be mad not to take this once-in-a-lifetime chance to walk through that door," Boris Johnson, a leading Brexit campaigner who later became prime

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 32 of 74**

minister, said a few weeks before the referendum.

Margaret MacMillan, emeritus professor of history at the University of Toronto, said Brexit was fueled by a bundle of motives including nostalgia "for an imagined past."

"It was against what people saw as unrestricted immigration. It was against what they saw as EU regulations. And then there was this mix of nostalgia — 'We fought alone in the Second World War.' Which was of course not true.

"It was never clearly explained what Brexit might entail."

Trying to make Brexit work made everyone unhappy

Hard reality soon collided with Brexiteers' bold promises of immigration controls, trade deals, more money for public services and an end to complex regulations emanating from Brussels.

Acrimonious divorce talks dragged on for years. The U.K. formally left the bloc on Jan. 31, 2020, followed by an 11-month transition period until the final split.

Prime Minister Theresa May, Cameron's successor, quit in 2019 after failing to find exit terms acceptable to a divided Parliament.

Johnson succeeded May and promised to "get Brexit done," and managed to secure a bare-bones trade deal after negotiations that left U.K.-EU relations in the deep freeze.

He was ousted by the Conservative Party in mid-2022 after mounting financial and ethical scandals. His replacement, Liz Truss, lasted just 49 days in office. Her successor, Rishi Sunak, thawed the frosty EU relationship without making major changes.

Starmer promised a "reset," but refused to consider rejoining the bloc's frictionless single market, which was free of tariffs and other trade barriers.

As he hands over power, Brexit remains unfinished business.

Political parties have fractured

Historian Anthony Seldon said Cameron called the referendum hoping it would end arguments about relations with Europe that had riven the Conservative Party. It didn't.

"The people who obsessed about it still obsess about it. Britain's problems have continued," Seldon told Times Radio.

During the divorce negotiations, Conservatives who wanted a softer Brexit and closer ties with the EU were pushed out of the party by the triumphant Brexiteer faction.

Labour, though much more pro-EU, also has an internal division between those who want to get closer to the bloc or even rejoin, and senior leaders like Starmer who want to avoid reopening old wounds.

A decade on, millions of voters have deserted the two big parties for alternatives including the left-leaning Green Party and the hard-right Reform UK led by Nigel Farage.

Farage has arguably been the biggest political winner from Brexit. He campaigned for the divorce then complained it had been betrayed. His anti-immigration message has shifted from focusing on Polish plumbers to asylum seekers in dinghies. His party consistently leads opinion polls.

Cynicism and political violence have grown

The economy has struggled in the past decade, with businesses facing new barriers to trade with Britain's closest neighbors, though Brexit is not the only cause of low growth. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and the Iran war also played a part.

Through it all, "we just haven't had politicians who've been upfront with the public about the fact that when they get into power, they won't be able to have no increases in taxes, no increases in debt, and better public services all in the same breath," said Hannah White, director of the Institute for Government think tank.

"And so people are disappointed."

Brexit failed to ease debate about immigration, which has only become more heightened, regardless of the numbers. Net migration rose after Brexit to more than 900,000 in 2023 before falling to 171,000 last year.

Cynicism has grown and trust in politicians has plunged. In recent years, agitators have fueled anti-immigration street violence following crimes committed by, or falsely reported to have been committed by, immigrants.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 33 of 74**

In the past, Britain had a firm barrier "between the conventional dominant politics of talk and argument, and what was seen as beyond the pale: violence on the streets," Grey said. "I think that boundary is being eroded. And I think that did to some large extent begin with Brexit."

Regrets? The UK has had a few

Polls suggest a degree of "Bregret" about Britain's choice a decade ago, with a recent Ipsos survey finding 52% of people in the U.K. would like to rejoin the EU while 33% oppose it.

Hundreds of people, many waving blue and yellow EU flags, marched through London on Saturday on a "rejoin" march. It was a much smaller turnout than the mass protests on both sides at the height of the Brexit drama. Many people just want to move on.

But Brexit remains a minefield that politicians fear to enter. Even if Britain wanted to rejoin, it would be a long road back to a wary EU.

Grey said that until politicians are willing to face the legacy of Brexit, Britain faces an "undertow of low-grade crisis."

He likened the U.K. to a person with a nagging illness that saps their energy.

"A chronic thing, in this case perhaps not incurable," he said. "But it's just that they don't fancy going to the doctor because they know it's not going to be very nice."

## **Messi sets World Cup scoring record as defending champion Argentina advances to knockout stage**

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Lionel Messi set a World Cup record with his 17th and 18th goals, and defending champion Argentina advanced to the knockout stage with a 2-0 victory over Austria on Monday.

Messi had a golden opportunity to break the record in the ninth minute, but went wide to the right on a penalty kick. Almost 30 minutes later, Messi caught Alexander Schlager leaning the wrong way after Thiago Almada let Facundo Medina's pass go by him directly onto Messi's left foot.

"There were moments when I was really angry about missing the penalty, but I was able to make up for it," Messi said.

In the waning seconds of injury time, Messi extended his record by sending a shot through several defenders after Schlager turned away his first attempt. He entered the game even with Germany striker Miroslav Klose, who scored 16 goals over four World Cups from 2002-14.

"Beyond anything I'm so happy for the win," Messi said. "It was huge, tough and difficult. It would allow us to be relaxed to what's ahead. All matches in this World Cup are very even, very intense. I'm enjoying this moment and craving to enjoy with my teammates."

Two days before his 39th birthday and with an ailing father back home, Messi celebrated twice with teammates to the delight of the decidedly pro-Argentine crowd at the sold-out home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys.

Most of those fans were wearing Messi's familiar No. 10 jersey with white and blue stripes, dwarfing the small pockets of red-clad Austrian supporters under the retractable roof that offered air-conditioned comfort on the second day of what is sure to be another hot Texas summer.

The scoring record came 40 years to the day since the late Diego Maradona's "goal of the century" — another No. 10 who made a solo run from the other side of midfield to give Argentina a two-goal lead in a 2-1 victory over England in the 1986 World Cup quarterfinals in Mexico City. Argentina went on to win the title.

Messi joined Just Fontaine and Jairzinho as the only players to score in six straight World Cup games, and he's second among men all-time with 122 international goals to Cristiano Ronaldo's 143.

Argentina extended its winning streak in the tournament to eight since a shocking loss to Saudi Arabia in its 2022 opener in Qatar.

La Albiceleste clinched the top spot in Group J with Jordan's 2-1 loss to Algeria on Monday night. Messi's playing status will be in question with nothing at stake when Argentina returns to AT&T Stadium to face

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 34 of 74**

Jordan in a group-stage finale Saturday night. Jordan has already been eliminated.

Messi has scored all five of Argentina goals in the tournament and has 12 World Cup goals since turning 35. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner as soccer's best player in Europe had his first World Cup hat trick in Argentina's 3-0 win over Algeria in its Group J opener last week in Kansas City.

Trailing by a goal early in second-half injury time, Austria winger Patrick Wimmer went just wide on a header after Kevin Danso had sent a header his direction off a free kick.

"I think that we were in possession of the ball more than other people expected," Austria coach Ralf Rangnick said through an interpreter. "Unfortunately, we weren't able to nullify every counter attack."

Austria, which opened with a 3-1 victory over Jordan, can advance with a win over Algeria on Saturday in Kansas City.

## **Vance says talks with Iranian officials set 'good foundation' for a deal to end the war**

By AAMER MADHANI, JAMEY KEATEN, SEUNG MIN KIM and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

OBBERGEN, Switzerland (AP) — Vice President JD Vance on Monday said his lengthy talks with senior Iranian officials in Switzerland created a "good foundation for a successful final deal" as they seek a permanent end to the war that the U.S. and Israel began in late February.

Vance and U.S. officials claimed progress on multiple fronts, including the establishment of "mechanisms" to ensure the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for global energy shipments, stays open and to address fighting between Israel and Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in southern Lebanon, where a ceasefire appeared to be holding.

The interim deal to end the fighting in Iran, signed last week by the leaders of the U.S. and Iran, sets a 60-day period for negotiations on key issues, including the future of Tehran's nuclear program amid concerns that Iran wants to use it for military purposes, a claim the country denies.

The vice president departed Switzerland as technical teams were still negotiating, and U.S. President Donald Trump talked up the efforts to keep the strait open to create "an oil gusher" as he stressed that the key to resolving the war was "respect" from Iran.

"As long as they respect us, I don't want to use the word fear because that's an inappropriate word, but as long as they respect us, we're not going to have any trouble," Trump said from the Oval Office.

Iran effectively closed the strait after the U.S. and Israel attacked on Feb. 28, causing fuel prices to skyrocket far beyond the region. The interim agreement to end the war was supposed to reopen the channel. Dozens of ships passed through it over the weekend, even though the main route is still mined and closed.

The lead negotiator of the Iranian delegation, Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, insisted on Monday that the Strait of Hormuz will be managed by Iran, but following international laws.

"Hopefully we can activate the strait again, in terms of passage, and bring prosperity back to regional and global economy," Qalibaf told Iranian state media on the plane on his way back from Switzerland.

Qalibaf and the Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, arrived on Monday night in Oman where they met with the country's Foreign Minister Badr al Busaidi to discuss the peace efforts and ensure safe navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. Treasury issued a 60-day license on Monday waiving sanctions on Iranian oil as part of the interim agreement. Notably, the license allows Iranian oil to be imported into the U.S., which has not imported significant amounts of Iranian oil since the 1990s.

Tanker traffic continued to pick up through the Strait of Hormuz. According to data and analytics firm Kpler, there were 71 confirmed transits over the weekend, with a peak of 35 crossings on Saturday. Before the war, 100 to 130 vessels passed through the strait each day.

Ships have been avoiding the central route to steer clear of mines, choosing instead to use the smaller northern route, which goes through Iranian waters, and the southern route, which goes through Omani waters. In the markets, Brent crude oil fell 3.2% to \$77.52 per barrel, closer to its roughly \$70 price from before the war. Benchmark U.S. crude oil fell 2.6% to \$73.86 per barrel.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 35 of 74**

Trump was not in Switzerland but loomed large over talks

Trump did not attend what was dubbed the "Lake Lucerne Summit," but his presence certainly loomed large. The talks were jolted by statements from Trump, who, from thousands of miles away, fired off comments that offended the Iranians. But the mediation effort in Switzerland started Sunday and stretched into early Monday.

"We haven't built the house, but we've laid a successful foundation to get to a good place for the American people," Vance told reporters.

The vice president suggested that the U.S. could agree to unfreeze Iranian assets for purchases of U.S. soy, corn and wheat. He said Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and one of the lead U.S. negotiators, came up with the idea with officials from Qatar.

Vance said Qatar would have approval over the process, and Iranian money that would be accessible as sanctions were lifted would buy American products "for the benefit of the Iranian people."

Iran, which has pressed for the unfreezing of billions of dollars in assets, has not commented on the idea. The assets have been frozen over years of sanctions, banking restrictions and legal disputes imposed by the U.S. and international community.

Iranians agree there was progress on their top issue

Shortly after the Iran war began on Feb. 28, Hezbollah and Israel also went to war, with Hezbollah firing rockets and drones at civilian communities in northern Israel and Israel seizing large swaths of southern Lebanon. Iran has insisted that addressing the fighting in Lebanon is a critical component of any deal to end the wider conflict.

Iran noted "major progress" to end the fighting in Lebanon and called that the first real test of the negotiations.

Foreign Minister Araghchi wrote on X that mediators delivered "major progress to end the Lebanon War." But he said the first "real test" of negotiations would be whether the mechanism succeeds in halting the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

Neither Israel nor Hezbollah is a signatory to the U.S.-Iran deal.

But as of Monday evening in the Middle East, the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah appeared to be holding.

"We have not detected trajectories from either side since yesterday," said Tilak Pokharel, a spokesperson for the U.N. peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon known as UNIFIL.

Airspace violations and Israeli military movements continued, Pokharel said.

Hezbollah has not announced any attacks on Israeli forces since Saturday.

The lull in fighting in Lebanon is the longest since the latest Israel-Hezbollah war began on March 2.

## **From peace talks to Pennsylvania: Trump visiting Mack Truck facility**

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

President Donald Trump is going to a Mack Truck facility in a battleground district in swing state Pennsylvania Tuesday, shifting attention to the U.S. economy in his first major public event beyond the capital since he signed an interim agreement to end the Iran war.

Trump's trip to the Allentown-area business comes as he works to try to put the conflict — and the higher gasoline prices it caused — in the rearview mirror as November midterm elections draw closer.

It's the president's fifth second-term visit to Pennsylvania, a key state whose support in 2016 and 2024 helped him to the White House. The Macungie, Pennsylvania, facility is in the 7th Congressional District, where incumbent Republican Rep. Ryan Mackenzie faces Democratic challenger Bob Brooks in November.

The visit comes amid rising prices that could color the verdict voters render on Trump's stewardship in the fall. About one-third of U.S. adults approved of Trump's approach to the economy, according to a June Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll. That's in line with last month for Trump

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 36 of 74**

on the issue.

The Iran war, which began Feb. 28, has also been a politically difficult issue for the president. Most Americans continued to disapprove of his handling of Iran, according to the June AP-NORC poll, which was being fielded as Trump announced a tentative deal with Iran and concluded just before the interim agreement was signed last week. It found about two-thirds, 65%, of U.S. adults disapprove of how the president is handling issues with Iran, unchanged from May.

Still, while most Democrats and independents view Trump's actions negatively, only about 3 in 10 of Republicans are unhappy.

Support from districts like the one he's visiting Tuesday are pivotal to Republicans holding narrow control of the House, where a loss could hobble the president's final two years in office. Mackenzie, a freshman lawmaker, is looking to hold onto a district Democrats have targeted to flip. Brooks, president of the state firefighters' union, has support from Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro, who's also seeking reelection this year.

Trump's predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden, also visited the Mack Truck facility to highlight regulations aimed at promoting manufacturing jobs. Manufacturing employment peaked in 1979 at nearly 19.6 million jobs. It trended downward after the 2001 recession and the 2007-09 Great Recession. The figure now stands at 12.6 million as of May, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The visits underscore Pennsylvania's status as a crucial swing state.

Trump visited Mount Pocono in December to road test messages that he's addressing affordability; in July 2025, he was in Pittsburgh to tout tens of billions of dollars of recent energy and technology investments in the state; in June 2025, he was in West Mifflin to tell steelworkers he was doubling the tariff on steel imports to protect the industry; and in March 2025 he attended the NCAA wrestling championship in Philadelphia.

## **Mexico, Italy and others see up to two more months of heat stress than in the 1970s, study says**

By ALEXA ST. JOHN Associated Press

Mexico, Kenya, Italy and other nations around the world are experiencing one to two more months of heat stress than they were several decades ago, new research published Monday says, and some areas even more so. Regions previously untouched by heat stress are now feeling it, too.

Extreme feels-like temperatures, heat stress days and tropical nights have all become dramatically more frequent, long and severe over the past six decades as the planet's warming intensifies — a result of the burning of fossil fuels coal, oil and gas — according to a new study published in the journal *Nature Climate Change* on Monday.

The researchers went beyond just temperature, which is frequently studied, and used feels-like temperatures, to understand more of the impact on people. They assessed heat stress on individual humans, influenced by temperature, humidity, wind speed and more. They used what's called the Universal Thermal Climate Index to analyze those factors and model the human body's response to the environment.

The combination of heat and humidity can be dangerous for humans, because humidity impacts how sweat evaporates, and that's a cooling mechanism. Heat waves that are humid can be more fatal than dry heat waves as humans don't cool down as easily.

Heat stress is worsening in already-warm regions, and beyond

Past studies have looked at the extent to which human-driven climate change has sent temperatures soaring, especially in recent years. One study says people globally suffered an average of 41 extra days of dangerous heat in 2024. Some research says that the world is on track to add nearly two months of superhot days each year by the end of the century.

Here, researchers looked at heat stress at three levels: strong (index temperatures of greater than or equal to 32 degrees Celsius, or 89.6 degrees Fahrenheit); very strong (index temperatures of greater than or equal to 38 degrees Celsius, or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit); and extreme (index temperatures of greater than or equal to 46 degrees Celsius, or 114.8 degrees Fahrenheit).

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 37 of 74**

Places that might see around 50 more days per year of at least strong heat stress compared with the 1970s include parts of Southern Africa, such as in Namibia and Angola; Eastern Africa, including parts of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda; and parts of Mexico and Central America.

In Southern Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey, some areas will see up to 40 additional days with strong heat stress compared with the 1970s. Much of Southern Europe is seeing almost a full month of additional strong heat stress days from decades ago.

In the U.S., much of the country sees 15 or more days of at least strong heat stress, and southern parts, including Texas and Florida, are seeing close to 25 or more days with very strong heat stress.

Those heat stress seasons are also lasting longer.

The study's lead author Rebecca Emerton, also a senior scientist at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts in the United Kingdom, said it was striking "to see heat stress not only intensifying in those places that we already consider as being hot or used to experiencing heat waves ... but also to see this, we call it, expanding footprint of heat stress expanding into regions where it's historically been rare or non-existent."

According to the study, the feels-like temperatures on the ten warmest nights of each year have also increased faster — 0.32 degrees Celsius (0.58 degrees Fahrenheit) per decade — than the ten warmest days, 0.27 degrees Celsius (0.49 degrees Fahrenheit) per decade.

For tropical nights, the researchers considered minimum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit). This means people might not be recovering properly from daytime heat in the overnight hours.

And now, one billion more people face at least one day of extreme heat stress each year than they did in the 1970s.

The future impact depends on action

The world has known that adding heat-trapping gases to the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels and cutting down forests will warm the globe, said Jennifer Francis, a climate scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center on Cape Cod, who was not involved in the research.

"This study adds stark details about increasing dangers to billions of humans," Francis said. "This analysis shows not only is temperature rising, but so is humidity, which makes high temperatures more deadly because our body's air conditioning system — sweating — struggles to keep up."

Emerton says the work highlights the urgent need to mitigate future warming and ensure adaptation strategies, heat health action plans, early warning systems and climate risk assessments are in place.

## **Trump is the frontman for his own party as rival groups vie to shape America's 250th anniversary**

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The complexities of the American story aren't hard to miss.

Just steps into the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the gavel used by Nancy Pelosi when she became the first female speaker of the U.S. House sits next to a red "Make America Great Again" cap. A shirt emblazoned with a pink triangle and "Silence = Death" protesting the government's inaction during the AIDS crisis hangs alongside a campaign shirt for President Ronald Reagan, whose administration was blamed for ignoring the epidemic.

The display is part of a broader exhibit flowing throughout the museum dubbed "In Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness," commemorating the 250th anniversary of American independence. With artifacts ranging from a Revolutionary War-era gunboat to a 1970 Earth Day flag, it's a reminder that the challenges and divides gripping the U.S. in the age of President Donald Trump, while stark, are not new.

"In some of those contestations, people find the hope and the resiliency to move forward," said Anthea M. Hartig, the museum's director. "History is filled with those moments where we think we're completely falling apart as we did in the Civil War and then we're trying to figure out how to build it back together again."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 38 of 74**

A unifying theme is being tested

That unifying theme is being tested as the anniversary celebrations intensify in the coming weeks with Trump once again giving himself central billing. The creation of Freedom 250, an organization aligned with the White House, has come to rival America 250, a bipartisan group founded by Congress a decade ago. The different groups add to a sense that even a milestone anniversary can become the source of division.

The tumultuous aftermath is apparent on the National Mall just outside the museum, where preparations are underway for "The Great American State Fair." A wave of artists including Martina McBride pulled out of performances at the fair, saying they didn't realize the political overtone of the event. Trump himself is now planning to speak there Wednesday.

The split screen will return on July Fourth as America 250 holds a concert in Los Angeles hosted by Queen Latifah and featuring performances from Chris Stapleton and The Smashing Pumpkins while the president returns to the National Mall for what he has described as a "Trump rally."

Trump is not the first president to deliver a high-profile July Fourth speech. In 1986, Reagan spoke from New York Harbor marking the 100th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. In 1976, President Gerald Ford delivered an address from Independence Hall in Philadelphia commemorating the bicentennial.

Their themes emphasized commonality and unity, framing the moment in a broader context that had little to do with the presidents themselves. Reagan joked he "wouldn't even think about trying to compete with a fireworks display" while noting "all the celebration of this day is rooted in history."

Ford spoke of the "American adventure" as a "continuing process."

"Liberty is for all men and women as a matter of equal and unalienable right," he said. "The establishment of justice and peace abroad will in large measure depend upon the peace and justice we create here in our own country, where we still show the way."

Trump tends to place the focus on himself

Trump, of course, tends to place more of the focus squarely on himself. He became the first president to host the Kennedy Center honors last year after a Trump-backed board named him chairman. The venue added his name to the building as well, prompting a federal judge to declare the move illegal and order its removal.

More recently, Trump has remade Washington in his image, demolishing the East Wing of the White House to make way for a ballroom and moving toward building a triumphal arch near Arlington National Cemetery. He's eyeing renovations at East Potomac Park even as he struggles with the return of algae at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, which he remodeled last month. He recently hosted a UFC fight at the White House.

"Trump is putting himself at the center of the story," said Mark Updegrove, chairman of the LBJ Foundation and a presidential historian. "Trump does not consider himself the steward of the presidency. He considers himself the embodiment of it."

The country is in a dour mood as the anniversary approaches. Only about one-quarter of Americans say the U.S. stands above all other countries in the world, according to an April poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About 3 in 10 say there are better countries than the U.S., an increase from 19% in an AP-NORC poll conducted in June 2016.

Americans are less likely to see a democratically elected government as "extremely" or "very" important to the United States' identity as a nation than they were just a few years ago. About two-thirds of U.S. adults now say a democratically elected government is highly important to the U.S.'s identity as a nation, down from 80% in 2021.

Big cultural moments face new rivals

Against that backdrop, it's little wonder that groups dedicated to the anniversary have multiplied. Even this year's Super Bowl halftime show — typically one of the few cultural moments bringing together much of the country — contended with a rival program this year after conservatives objected to Bad Bunny performing on the main stage.

Heading into the final days before the holiday, the main groups — Freedom 250 and America 250 — are outwardly aiming to downplay any tensions.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 39 of 74**

Freedom 250 spokesperson Rachel Reisner said the organization was focused on “signature events and initiatives,” including the fair, and is “sparking a unifying movement across all 50 states.”

Rosie Rios, the chair of America 250, said her main priority is delivering programming for all Americans, whether that’s eight consecutive ball drops that will unfold across the country, student competitions or a massive volunteer effort. As for other organizations that have emerged like Freedom 250, “the more celebrations, the merrier.”

“We can’t be all things to all Americans,” Rios said. “But we have something for every American and the more opportunities for everyone to participate in July 4th and beyond, we’re thrilled.”

## **Clive Davis helped launch or shape the careers of these music stars, across genres and decades**

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

The legendary music executive Clive Davis, who has died at age 94, was known for deep, trusting relationships with the artists he represented. It was a mutual respect that allowed him to shape their careers — and them to shape his.

Here’s a look at how Davis worked with some of the varied acts — from the Grateful Dead to Alicia Keys — he shepherded during a six-decade career in the music industry.

Janis Joplin

Davis played an important role in shaping Janis Joplin’s career, but she arguably played an even bigger role in shaping his.

After Davis became president of Columbia Records at age 35, he attended the Monterey Pop festival in California looking for new acts. He saw Big Brother & The Holding Company, featuring Joplin, and faced what he recalled in a 2022 speech as his first major decision as head of the label: “Should I personally sign an artist just based on my gut?” he said.

“I did make that decision, and my life would never be the same,” Davis said.

He persuaded Joplin to release an abbreviated edit of the single “Piece of my Heart,” ensuring it got radio play. Davis also pushed her to leave Big Brother and go solo.

After Joplin’s death in 1970, Davis found her recording of “Me and Bobby McGee” amid the sessions for her album “Pearl,” released posthumously to great acclaim.

Carlos Santana

Davis first signed Santana to Columbia Records in 1968, and the guitarist and singer became known for hits including “Black Magic Woman” and “Oye Como Va” — not to mention a legendary performance at Woodstock in 1969.

Decades later, Davis reconnected with Santana, who was looking again for musical relevance.

Davis suggested an album that would feature some of Santana’s original material as well as collaborations with contemporary artists. The result — 1999’s “Supernatural” — included the song “Do You Like the Way” with Lauryn Hill as well as hits “Maria Maria” with Wyclef Jean and “Smooth” with Rob Thomas. The record won eight Grammys, tying a record set by Michael Jackson’s “Thriller.”

In a social media post, Santana said Davis “believed in Santana from the beginning, and years later he believed in us again.”

Bruce Springsteen

Davis signed a 22-year-old Springsteen to Columbia Records in 1972. Davis recalled believing that Springsteen was far more than a Bob Dylan copycat, but that he could be a “poet warrior” and one of the best performers ever.

After Springsteen turned in his debut album, Davis told him to try again: It didn’t have any singles. Springsteen took the advice to heart and wrote two new tracks: “Blinded by the Light,” which was later turned into a hit by Manfred Mann, and “Spirit in the Night.”

In an appearance on the “Late Show” with David Letterman, Davis recalled giving the Boss early advice

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 40 of 74**

on his live performance, telling him that when he has a large stage to play on, he should use it rather than just stand still.

"He changed my life when he signed me to Columbia Records," Springsteen wrote in a social media post. Whitney Houston

There is no artist Davis was more closely associated with than Whitney Houston. He met her at a New York club called Sweetwater's, where the 19-year-old was performing with her mother Cissy Houston, a celebrated gospel and soul singer. She sang "The Greatest Love of All," a song Davis had previously commissioned for the Muhammad Ali movie "The Greatest."

"As soon as she started singing that song, I was stunned," Davis recalled in a CNN interview in 2022.

He signed her to Arista in 1983, and the label took a deliberate two years to find the right songs and producers for her debut album, one of the biggest ever. She went on to become the label's best-selling artist — and one of the most influential singers in history.

Houston's relationship with Davis was so close that her team insisted on a "key man" clause, giving her the right to leave her contract if Davis ever left Arista.

Davis played a key role in shaping the soundtrack to Houston's 1992 film "The Bodyguard," insisting on keeping a minimalistic arrangement and her iconic a capella intro to her transcendent Dolly Parton cover "I Will Always Love You."

The Grateful Dead

Davis played the long game with the Grateful Dead. He had wanted to sign the band — or at least singer and lead guitarist Jerry Garcia — on Columbia Records since the late 1960s, but the Dead were under contract with rival Warner Bros.

Instead, Davis signed the New Riders of the Purple Sage, a psychedelic country band that featured Garcia. When the Dead were looking for a new major label in the late 1970s, Davis landed them on his recently founded Arista Records.

Late Dead guitarist Bob Weir observed that Davis was "the one suit we weren't distrustful of." In concert, he sometimes changed the lyrics to the Dead standard "Jack Straw" from "We used to play for silver, now we play for life" to "We used to play for acid, now we play for Clive."

Davis took a patient approach to the band's studio work, telling them they should record only when they were ready to record, author Blair Jackson wrote in his biography of Garcia. The Dead, famously ambivalent about commercial success, eventually repaid him with their biggest hit, 1987's "Touch of Grey."

Alicia Keys

Keys was 15 when she signed with Columbia Records in 1996. Creative differences soon emerged, with the label insisting on hiring teams of professionals to work with her. Keys would later recall feeling disrespected.

Davis, who was splitting with Arista, helped get her out of her Columbia contract and eventually signed her to his new label — J Records — in 2000. She played him some of her songs at his office, and he sensed her star power and knew she should have creative control over her songs.

Her debut album — "Songs in A Minor" — was a masterpiece and won five Grammys in 2002. But Davis noted that her music could not be easily categorized, and as a result it was at risk of not getting the airplay it deserved. In a 2002 interview, he recalled calling up Oprah Winfrey and asking her to do a show featuring Keys. Winfrey agreed — and the single "Fallin'" took off.

In a social media post, Keys called Davis "the visionary who transformed dreams into reality, leaving an indelible mark on music and lives worldwide."

Kenny G

There wasn't much of a market for instrumental music in the early 1980s, but Davis saw the soft jazz saxophonist Kenny G in a club and knew he had something. He signed Kenny G to Arista in 1982, and he went on to become the best-selling instrumental artist of all time.

In an interview with CNN on Monday, Kenny G — as he often has — credited Davis with his success. Davis, he said, knew when to let the artist steer the ship and when to step in with direction. With Kenny

G, that meant not telling him how a sax solo should go, but participating by finding singers, such as Michael Bolton, to pair with him.

"I wouldn't be standing here if it wasn't for him taking chances on me," he said.

## **Mamdani and AI industry flex political power in New York, plus more to watch in Tuesday's primaries**

By JESSE BEDAYN and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two opposing factions in the artificial intelligence industry square off in a Democratic primary for a U.S. House seat. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani tests his political clout by backing fellow democratic socialists. And President Donald Trump, after two of his chosen candidates for governor lost Republican primaries this month, ensured it won't happen again — by endorsing both candidates in a South Carolina runoff.

Those are a few of the races to watch on Tuesday as voters head to the polls for primaries in Maryland, New York, South Carolina and Utah.

Manhattan House primary is a bellwether for pro-AI regulation candidates

The crowded Democratic primary became a proxy battle between two powerful camps of the artificial intelligence industry because of one candidate: New York Assemblyman Alex Bores.

Bores, a former Palantir employee who cited ethical concerns in leaving the company, pushed one of the more sweeping state-level AI regulation bills in the country. Now, Bores points to that legislation — which faced some industry pushback — as a framework for how he'd approach regulation in Congress.

So when he stepped into the race for the New York congressional district being vacated by retiring Democratic Rep. Jerry Nadler, a political group underwritten by investors in OpenAI spent more than \$7 million on ads against Bores.

Then an opposing wing of the industry, one more in favor of regulation, rode to Bores' aid.

Political groups partly funded by Anthropic, which makes the chatbot Claude, spent more \$10 million to boost Bores' candidacy. Anthropic was co-founded by former OpenAI employee, Dario Amodei, who left the company partly over concerns about AI safety.

The election will offer some measure of the political might of the two AI industry factions.

Mamdani flexes his political influence by endorsing progressive insurgents

The New York City mayor endorsed Democratic primary candidates hailing from his own political camp — a progressive and two democratic socialists — who are challenging more established candidates, some backed by party leadership.

U.S. Rep. Dan Goldman, whose seat extends from lower Manhattan to a chunk of Brooklyn, is up against Mamdani-backed challenger Brad Lander, the former comptroller. A central contention between the two Jewish candidates is the war in Gaza, with Lander assailing Goldman for not being critical enough of Israel.

North of that race, in upper Manhattan, Democratic U.S. Rep. Adriano Espaillat, 71, is facing off against Mamdani-endorsed Darializa Avila Chevalier, 32. The latter is a democratic socialist who hasn't held public office before and works at a public defender's office providing legal aid to victims of police brutality.

For the seat covering parts of Brooklyn and Queens, where U.S. Rep. Nydia Velázquez is retiring, Mamdani endorsed Assemblymember Claire Valdez, another self-described democratic socialist. The departing Velázquez has endorsed another contender, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso.

The three primaries will help distinguish not just Mamdani's political clout, but the continued viability of democratic socialist platforms in New York City.

Trump hedges in South Carolina after shaky endorsement record in gubernatorial races

Trump often touts his otherwise strong record of endorsing winning candidates in Republican primaries, but his picks in gubernatorial races haven't found as much success: his choices in Georgia and Iowa lost this month.

After the defeats, Trump ensured an ironclad victory for his endorsement in South Carolina's Republican runoff for governor: he backed both candidates on the same ballot.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 42 of 74**

The president initially supported Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette in May, but on Friday, he added an endorsement for Evette's opponent, state Attorney General Alan Wilson.

"I can't hurt one of them by only Endorsing the other, so therefore, I am going to Endorse, for Governor of South Carolina, both Pam Evette and Alan Wilson!" he wrote in a social media post Friday. "It's a Wealth of Riches – With either one you can't go wrong."

The projected winner? Trump's endorsement record.

Utah redistricting opens up a sole Democratic battleground, and a debate over the party's future

It's unusual for Utah's Democratic primaries to draw much attention, but that's because the party hasn't had much of a shot in the staunchly red state. That is until redistricting last year.

It created a lone Democratic island centered on Salt Lake City, which has a dark enough hue of blue that primary candidates have found themselves jostling for who's farther to the left. And Democratic primary voters, as in other left-leaning districts across the country, will decide how progressive they'd like their candidate.

That's an unusual tune for Utah Democrats, and for primary candidate Ben McAdams. The former U.S. representative has tried to cast off his reputation as a moderate as he runs against three opponents from his progressive flank.

When McAdams last ran in 2018, ousting a Republican, he described himself as pro-life and fashioned himself as a moderate. Now, in the new left-leaning district, he's pledged to support abortion rights and said he's only "moderate in tone."

The more progressive candidates challenging him include state Sen. Nate Blouin, who has said the electorate has grown accustomed to Democrats who will "play nice" with Republicans and who has won support from Sen. Bernie Sanders. Another is political newcomer Liban Mohamed.

Maryland Republicans seek an heir to Hogan in bid to retake governorship

Republican Larry Hogan reigned as Maryland governor for eight years, standing on a more moderate conservative platform to keep his perch in the left-leaning, East Coast state.

At Hogan's departure, Democratic Gov. Wes Moore took over in 2024, and is now seeking reelection for a second term. But so far Republicans haven't found a clear successor to Hogan as Tuesday's primary forces a decision from a field of nine candidates.

One is Dan Cox, an attorney who lost his gubernatorial bid four years ago, and who has more embraced a rightward flank, pledging to cut taxes and invest in housing affordability programs. Then there's Ed Hale, owner of the Baltimore Blast soccer team and retired banking executive, who flipped his party from Democrat to Republican for this race.

## **How Starmer went from Labour Party hero to calling it quits within 2 years**

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer won his job after leading his party to a massive victory in 2024. Less than two years later, he resigned as his party rebelled in the wake of widespread losses in local elections.

Starmer's popularity plunged amid a struggling economy, a series of policy missteps, one particularly poor appointment and a perceived lack of vision.

The combination of challenges led to a thrashing for his Labour Party in local elections this spring and calls to step down that cleared a path for a would-be challenger to step forward and ultimately force him aside Monday.

This is a look at how his short-lived premiership unraveled.

Victory put Labour Party in power after 14 years of Conservative rule

Starmer's coronation on July 4, 2024 ushered in an optimism for Labour as it captured 411 of 650 seats in Parliament and drove out the Conservative Party after 14 years of rule. It was a massive turnaround from historic losses in the previous election.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 43 of 74**

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said Starmer would never be forgotten for leading the “party from the brink, back to power.”

In his victory speech, Starmer spoke of national renewal and change that would restore government to support “working people.”

“And now we can look forward,” he said. “Walk into the morning, the sunlight of hope, pale at first but getting stronger through the day, shining once again, on a country with the opportunity after 14 years to get its future back.”

It didn’t take long for storm clouds to appear.

Starmer inherited a lagging economy and had to reverse unpopular changes

With Britain’s public finances battered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the repercussions of Russia’s full-blown invasion of Ukraine, his government didn’t exactly have much room for big giveaways.

Voters struggling to pay their bills had tossed out the Tories, but initial efforts by Labour to turn the economy around failed to bring major change.

If anything, Starmer and his Treasury chief, Rachel Reeves, made things worse by being overly pessimistic about their inheritance. Their downbeat comments weighed on confidence and prompted businesses and consumers to further retrench.

Their initial policy actions didn’t help either.

Labour’s election manifesto specifically ruled out increases in the major revenue earners of income tax and sales tax. Needing to plug a hole in the public finances, they opted to increase a tax that businesses pay on their staff.

That proved unpopular and many companies opted to cut back on hiring.

Several other policy changes led to blowback from the public and Starmer was forced to make a series of embarrassing U-turns that provided political capital for opponents and fed beliefs that the prime minister didn’t stand for much.

The government dropped a plan to end winter home heating subsidies for millions of retirees, reversed itself on tough plans to cut welfare spending and eased a new agricultural inheritance tax after angry farmers protested and clogged the streets of London with tractors.

Outside of the economy, there were further flip flops, not least in Starmer’s decision to launch a national inquiry into organized child sexual abuse after pressure from opposition politicians — and Elon Musk.

Appointment of Jeffrey Epstein pal as US ambassador backfired

Starmer’s decision to appoint controversial Labour member Peter Mandelson as U.S. ambassador — despite knowing he had been friends with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein — backfired badly.

Initially, the decision to send a man dubbed “Prince of Darkness” for his ruthless spin doctoring seemed like a genius stroke in winning over the unpredictable U.S. President Donald Trump. Mandelson’s trade experience and ease schmoozing with billionaires helped secure a U.S. trade deal with favorably lower tariffs for Britain than many other countries.

But when revelations emerged in September 2025 that Mandelson had been much closer to the late financier Epstein than he had led on, Starmer fired him.

The appointment, though, has repeatedly haunted Starmer.

Starmer’s judgment was further questioned when internal government files showed Mandelson was named to the post despite being labeled a “reputational risk.” Additional developments showed Mandelson failed a security background check before his appointment and was being investigated on allegations he passed sensitive government information to Epstein when he was a Cabinet minister more than 15 years ago.

Mandelson has denied any wrongdoing.

Rivals emerged as Labour took battering at polls

Starmer’s popularity was in the tank when center-left Labour took a disastrous beating in local government elections last month and set in motion political maneuvering that ultimately led to his demise some six weeks later.

More than 100 Labour members of Parliament called for Starmer to step down after Reform UK, a

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 44 of 74**

relatively new anti-immigration and hard-right party, won the largest number of local seats and the rising Green Party siphoned voters from the left.

Several government ministers, including Health Secretary Wes Streeting, quit in protest, fueling speculation he would challenge his former boss.

A member of Parliament stepped down to make way for Andy Burnham, the popular Mayor of Greater Manchester, to return to London and take on Starmer.

With Burnham's victory last week, Starmer holed up in the prime minister's country estate over the weekend to consider his options as some party insiders urged him to set a timetable for his resignation.

An emotional Starmer announced on Monday morning that he would resign. Burnham was sworn in later in the day in the House of Commons, where he received a hero's welcome.

It remains to be seen if anyone other than Burnham steps forward when Labour's national executive committee open nominations July 9 to replace Starmer.

## **The Strait of Hormuz's future is unsettled even as more ships venture through**

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Ship traffic has picked up in the Strait of Hormuz since Iran and the U.S. signed an interim deal to end a war that constricted global oil supplies and fueled inflation, but questions surrounding control of the vital waterway and whether vessels will be charged tolls to cross it could interfere with negotiations to forge a lasting peace.

Tehran and Washington clashed over the Strait of Hormuz again this past weekend. Citing Israel's latest attacks on Lebanon, Iran declared that it reclosed the strait. The U.S. was quick to contest that. Maritime tracking data showed that dozens of ships passed through on Saturday and Sunday, though far fewer than the daily average before the war.

President Donald Trump suggested the U.S. might impose its own tolls on strait crossings if a final deal with Iran was not reached during the countries' 60-day negotiating period. Passage was free before the war, but Iran last month established a new governmental authority to collect money from ships and has said it still expects vessels to register with the Persian Gulf Strait Authority.

No one country owns the Strait of Hormuz, which borders both Iran and Oman. Last week's memorandum of understanding allowed Iran to manage the strait for now while holding discussions with Oman and six other Gulf states "to define the future administration and maritime services" of the waterway. Iran agreed not to charge transiting vessels tolls for 60 days.

Legal experts and maritime associations have repeatedly stressed that a toll regime would upend decades of international trade precedent involving the world's waters. If the U.S. and Iran cement a final deal, analysts say it could take months for the flow of oil, natural gas, fertilizer and other commodities to return to prewar levels.

Here's a closer look at the status of the Strait of Hormuz:

**Ships are moving but not at the prewar pace**

Data and analytics company Kpler said its tracking confirmed 71 ships traveled through the strait between Friday and Sunday, with a peak of 35 crossings Saturday. In contrast, about 100 to 130 vessels a day made the journey before the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran in late February, and Tehran responded with its own attacks and effective closure of the waterway.

As part of the provisional Iran-U.S. framework, Iran said it would conduct demining work within 30 days and remove "technical and military obstacles" to shipping. Iran's lead negotiator and parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, told Iranian state media Monday that his country would manage the strait in accordance with international maritime law.

The main central route of the Strait of Hormuz is still mined and remains closed. Ships have been using the smaller northern route, which goes through Iranian waters, and the southern route, which goes through Omani waters. But "caution is still clear" in the many vessels either sticking to Iran's prescribed

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 45 of 74**

route or trying to conceal their positions and identities by keeping their transponders off, Kpler said.

Both Iran and US have threatened tolls

Early in the war, Iran threatened to attack ships that tried to use the Strait of Hormuz without its approval and began vetting vessels in a pay-to-pass scheme that shipping analysts dubbed the "tollbooth." Iran also demanded in early April the right to collect tolls as a precondition for relinquishing its chokehold on the strait.

Although the Trump administration imposed sanctions on the Persian Gulf Strait Authority late last month to oppose what Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described as Tehran's attempt to extort global maritime trade, the president on Saturday suggested the U.S. could impose its own tolls for "services rendered as the Guardian Angel to the countries of the Middle East."

The administration has not provided details on how the U.S. would apply any charges on ships if talks with Iran do not yield a completed agreement. Shipping analysts have expressed surprise at how much control over the strait the initial agreement gave Iran.

"Almost all the power goes into Iran to determine the arrangements going forward in the future. This is what we really need clarity on," said Philip Belcher, marine director of Intertanko, a trade group for independent tanker owners, said Thursday.

Experts say tolls would violate maritime law

Collecting tolls in the strait could violate an enduring principle of international maritime trade: freedom of peaceful navigation. The concept was codified by the United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea, which took effect in 1994.

The treaty provides ships the right of unimpeded "transit passage" through more than 100 straits worldwide, including the Strait of Hormuz. It only applies to natural waterways, so authorities can charge fees for ships to traverse man-made waterways such as the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal.

Oman is among the more than 170 countries that have ratified the U.N. convention, but the U.S. and Iran are not. Maritime associations have argued that all nations remain subject to the treaty's provisions.

James Kraska, a U.S. Naval War College professor of international maritime law, notes that the U.S. and Iran are both members of the International Maritime Organization, the U.N. agency that oversees safety and security measures in international shipping. Both countries also are parties to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, a treaty that governs standards for building and operating ships.

In straits like Hormuz, fees can only be applied at established ports of entry or for services specifically requested by a ship, such as specialized navigation aid through hazardous areas, according to Kraska, who is also a visiting professor at Harvard Law School.

"If Iran wants to apply those to everybody, then it has to adjust the traffic separation scheme rules, and that can only be done through the member states of the International Maritime Organization," he said.

"You can't impose fees for a ship exercising its right of transit passage," Kraska added. "So the bottom line is, no — fees in this context are just not lawful."

Countries sometimes have joined forces to share the costs of maintaining of a strait, he noted. For example, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore worked with the International Maritime Organization and later other countries to develop such an agreement for the Strait of Malacca, but it involved negotiated contributions from the states using the passage, not fees on individual ships.

Disruptions could continue for months ahead

Conditions in the Strait of Hormuz have escalated or deteriorated quickly over the course of the war. While the outlook for shipping has improved since the U.S. and Iran pledged to extend their ceasefire, "there is a degree of nervousness around the situation," said Marcus Baker, the global head of marine, cargo and logistics at insurance brokerage and risk management company Marsh.

"As far as the insurance position is concerned, there's a good deal of support for ship owners that are trying to move out" during this period, but the interim deal between Iran and the U.S. does not include language for keeping the strait toll-free beyond the negotiating window, Baker said.

"We'll see what the next six weeks brings us," he said.

## Former Oklahoma death row inmate back in court as case proceeds to retrial in 1997 murder case

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A former Oklahoma death row inmate who was released from incarceration after nearly three decades is scheduled to be back in court as his case proceeds to a retrial for a 1997 killing that put him on the brink of execution three times.

Richard Glossip's initial conviction was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court last year, and he was released on bond by a state judge last month. Tuesday's hearing will determine whether his case goes straight to retrial or if he will be given a new hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence to proceed.

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond has said the state would seek to retry him on a murder charge but would not pursue the death penalty again.

Glossip had been sentenced to death over the 1997 killing in Oklahoma City of his former boss, motel owner Barry Van Treese, who was beaten with a baseball bat in what prosecutors have alleged was a murder-for-hire scheme.

The Supreme Court ruled last year that prosecutors' decision to allow a key witness to give testimony they knew to be false violated Glossip's constitutional right to a fair trial.

Glossip has maintained his innocence and has drawn support from Kim Kardashian and other prominent figures. Van Treese's family had asked the Supreme Court to leave Glossip's conviction and sentence intact.

During Glossip's time on death row, Oklahoma courts set nine different execution dates for him. He came so close to being put to death that he ate three separate last meals. In 2015, he was even held in a cell next to Oklahoma's execution chamber, waiting to be strapped to a gurney and die by lethal injection.

## Judge blocks use of federal database to check citizenship, saying it could wrongly purge voters

By ALI SWENSON and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Monday ruled that a recently revamped version of a federal tool central to the Trump administration's efforts to nationalize elections can no longer be used.

U.S. District Court Judge Sparkle L. Sooknanan sided with advocacy groups that argued the recent upgrades to the program, called Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE, aggregated Americans' sensitive personal data in a way that could result in voters being wrongly purged from voter rolls.

"All in all, the federal government has knowingly trampled on the privacy rights of American citizens in a manner that threatens the sacred right to vote," Sooknanan said in an order explaining the decision. "This Court cannot stand idly by while that happens."

She said Congress had expressly prohibited the government from centralizing Americans' personal identifying information and that the federal agencies that created the SAVE program "knew that the database violates those statutory protections."

The decision is a major legal setback for President Donald Trump in his efforts to use federal agencies to encourage a nationwide crackdown on having noncitizens illegally on state voter rolls. The modified SAVE system, which critics had referred to as an unlawful centralized federal database of voter information, had been a key pillar of the second election executive order the Republican president signed earlier this year. The ruling leaves its future uncertain.

"It's amazing how hard the Left will fight to stop us from solving problems they insist do not exist," James Percival, general counsel at the Department of Homeland Security, said of the ruling in a social media post.

DHS referred to his post as its comment on the ruling. The Department of Justice said in an emailed statement that it would "continue to aggressively defend President Trump's immigration enforcement agenda and DHS's use of the SAVE system to verify citizenship."

Voting by noncitizens was already rare

The executive order seeking to create a national voter list is among numerous steps Trump has taken

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 47 of 74**

during his second term to try to overhaul the way elections are run. He also has tried to force voters to provide documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote, ban mail ballots from counting if they are received after Election Day and prohibit the Postal Service from mailing ballots to people not on an approved list of voters. Most of those steps have been blocked by various courts, in part because the Constitution gives states and Congress the authority to set election rules, but provides no such power to the president.

Voting by noncitizens is already illegal and punishable as a potential felony that could lead to deportation. It also is rare, accounting for just a tiny fraction of those on state voter rolls,

The SAVE program was created under an immigration law mandating that DHS help federal, state and local agencies prevent government benefits from going to noncitizens. At least 25 states used it to check their voter rolls since April 2025, after the Trump administration significantly expanded its search abilities. Since then, at least 67 million registrations have been scanned through the program, but critics worry it could end up purging valid voters from the rolls.

Anthony Nel was one of those whose registrations were wrongly flagged. The South Africa native became a U.S. citizen more than a decade ago but had his voter registration in Denton, Texas, north of Dallas, canceled temporarily last year after Texas ran its voter file through SAVE. The check wrongly identified him as a potential noncitizen.

"I hope others can see this fight and not take their right to vote for granted," he said in a text message.

Right to keep Americans' data private is at heart of the case

The plaintiffs, including the League of Women Voters, the Electronic Privacy Information Center and five unnamed U.S. citizens, had alleged the revamped SAVE program violated Americans' privacy and voting rights. The groups also alleged the Trump administration violated federal privacy laws by ignoring transparency requirements about the changes to the system.

"The agencies were scrambling to comply with an Executive Order aimed at reshaping federal elections, which directed them to create a system for mass voter verification," the judge wrote. "So they haphazardly combined and repurposed the private information of millions of Americans, including citizenship data that they knew to be unreliable."

Plaintiffs attorney Nikhel Sus told the court during the October hearing that naturalized citizens face a greater risk of unlawfully being purged from voter rolls.

"They are uniquely vulnerable to errors in the database," said Sus, an attorney for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

Sus said Monday he sees Sooknanan's ruling as an "across the board victory" and noted the plaintiffs were pleased the judge's ruling reinforced their argument that the federal government doesn't have implied authority to freely share sensitive data across agencies.

Mark Johnson, who teaches at the University of Kansas law school and regularly pursues lawsuits over election laws, said "it couldn't be more clear" that the SAVE program violates federal privacy laws.

He said an executive order from Trump cannot override a federal law.

"It's an illegal idea. Plus it's a bad idea," he said.

Elon Musk's DOGE effort was crucial for updating the SAVE system

During the 2024 presidential campaign, as Trump pushed false claims of widespread noncitizen voting, Republican secretaries of state began requesting improvements to the SAVE system to make it more efficient for catching noncitizens on their rolls. One limitation was that the system had been able to check just a single individual at a time.

DHS, Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency delivered on those requests in 2025, according to public announcements. They made SAVE free for election officials, allowed agencies to search voters by the thousands and began permitting queries using names, birthdays and Social Security numbers, as opposed to requiring DHS-issued identification numbers.

Several secretaries of state have said the SAVE overhaul improved its value as one of multiple tools they use to assess voter citizenship. But in her ruling, Judge Sooknanan said the plaintiffs had shown that the updated system had indeed been identifying some lawful voters as noncitizens and that states using it

"are actively removing United States citizens from voter rolls based on inaccurate information."

## Patrols and nanobubbles on display at the Reflecting Pool as Trump looks for a renovation do-over

By NATHAN ELLGREN and BILL BARROW Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — National Guard members and U.S. Park Police patrolled the deck around the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool on Monday as President Donald Trump's administration faces a self-imposed deadline to fix a botched renovation before the nation's 250th anniversary celebration.

The patrols came two days after Trump said authorities had made "multiple arrests" of people he insisted were responsible for damage to the peeling coating after an algae bloom occurred. The liner was installed as part of his \$14 million-plus project.

The president has confirmed the problems most likely require draining the pool again for liner repairs and he promised a quick fix. Without offering substantiation, he also said vandals dumped fertilizer in the pool and slashed the coating with a box cutter.

But the timeline was not clear Monday, with the White House saying damaged areas are still being assessed. Contractors and federal workers in recent days have been using chemicals and ozone nanobubbles to combat the algae.

Trump pitched the original improvements as intended to clean, beautify and reinforce an iconic site that he said had become dilapidated and dirty because of previous presidents' neglect. Algae has plagued the pool for a century, and Trump insisted that a newly installed "American flag blue" coating, which he selected himself, would turn the pool into a gleaming expanse along the National Mall.

Yet within weeks of Trump declaring the rehabilitation completed in time for Independence Day, the water was plagued by a vivid green algae bloom that clouded the pool's coating. A piece of liner, about 4 square feet, was observed Friday partially floating in the pool. The Associated Press saw additional pieces in the water Monday.

Via social media, the president has blamed the problems on "SICK, DERANGED PEOPLE!" He asserted Monday on Truth Social that intentional damages include a "300 foot long gash" and that "chemicals have been illegally placed in the water." A day earlier, Trump posted, "Work will begin immediately on fixing the seriously vandalized Reflecting Pool."

At an executive order signing on Monday, the president said five people had been arrested and five more were under suspicion, and he deflected blame for the pool's maintenance issues: "I can't help it if somebody goes in with a knife and starts hacking it up." He has not backed up those claims, and even if anyone has deliberately peeled or cut the lining, that would not explain the algae bloom that appeared more intensely than what typically occurred before the renovation.

Images showing that Trump's project apparently backfired boomeranged across social media last week, drawing crowds of onlookers eager to see the effects themselves. An unknown number ended up being detained by federal authorities.

One man arrested was David Hearn, 67, of Bethesda, Maryland. A former Olympic canoe racer, Hearn told The Associated Press that he reached into the pool because he wanted to examine the peeling new coating. He said he briefly touched a chunk that was still attached to the side of the pool, then let go shortly after a park worker told him to. Hearn said he was then detained by National Guard troops and Park Police for five hours before being released Friday night.

"I'm a curious citizen," Hearn said in a telephone interview. "I reached down to see what it felt like. It was very rubbery."

The Park Police did not immediately respond Monday to AP's questions about how many arrests were made and whether any charges had been filed. Washington's Metropolitan Police Department said Monday that the agency is not involved.

The White House said Monday that any arrests have been made only by the U.S. Park Police.

It was not immediately apparent what criminal or civil violation someone might commit reaching into

the pool. Trump, in one of his Truth Social posts, cited laws against defacing monuments as grounds for imprisoning anyone harming the pool.

## **What to know about a cold storage warehouse fire in Los Angeles**

By AMY TAXIN and OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

Six days into a firefight at a massive frozen-food storage facility near downtown Los Angeles, firefighters have yet to enter the building and have begun moving parts of the exterior walls to try to gain access.

Smoke is billowing from the warehouse, which is roughly 500,000-square-foot (46,451-square-meter), covered in solar panels and insulated like a freezer. It's located across the street from homes in Boyle Heights, a working-class neighborhood east of downtown, and city officials on Monday warned people to stay inside or wear masks due to smoke pollution.

A large warehouse fire can typically be put out in a day, but in a cold storage facility, it can take weeks, authorities said. The fire sparked Wednesday.

Here's what to know:

Why is it taking so long to put it out?

Fires in cold storage facilities often burn for weeks because their heavily insulated ceilings, roofs and walls make them difficult to extinguish, Los Angeles Fire Department spokesperson Jamie Stewart said.

Firefighters have not been able to enter the building due to the danger posed by floor-to-ceiling heavy-duty steel rack shelving, he said. They also have been unable to quickly ventilate the roof due to the insulation, which is what they would typically do to release gas and smoke and gain visibility inside a warehouse, he said.

The warehouse has rows that are 65-feet (20 meters) tall and 650-feet (200 meters) long loaded with pallets and boxes filled with frozen food, similar to the interior of a Costco or Home Depot warehouse store, Los Angeles Fire Department Chief Jaime Moore said during Monday's news conference. There were about 85 million pounds (38.6 million kilograms) of frozen food stored inside, he said.

"I don't know that we'll ever get firefighters inside because the entire roof has been compromised and it is sitting on top of (those) 65-foot towers," Moore said. "It's extremely dangerous, and I don't foresee ever putting our firefighters in that type of danger."

Firefighters have been stripping away exterior walls on certain sides of the building and dousing it with heavy streams of water.

What caused the fire?

Michigan-based company Lineage Logistics, which operates the facility, said in a statement it believes the fire began when subcontractors were working on solar panels on the roof. But the official cause of the fire hasn't been determined, the company said.

Lineage is working with fire officials investigating the blaze, the statement said.

Moore said the fire department continues to investigate but that preliminary information shows Lineage, which rents the warehouse, was leasing the roof to a solar company that what was working on the panels when the fire started.

"They attempted to try to extinguish it. They dialed 911, and it was off to the races," he said.

What is stored at the facility?

The facility, called Big Bear, stores products such as seafood, pork, beef and poultry before they're shipped to grocery stores and restaurants on the U.S. West Coast, Lineage said on its website.

A message sent to Lineage seeking details about the food and the companies affected by it was not immediately returned.

What are the air quality concerns?

The South Coast Air Quality Management District extended a warning about poor air quality in the area until Tuesday afternoon, saying the blaze continues to produce smoke impacting the neighborhood and areas north and east of the fire. The smoke is carrying microscopic particles known as PM2.5 that can penetrate deep into the lungs.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 50 of 74**

Light winds will also push the smoke in all directions, potentially impacting other parts of metropolitan LA, the district said.

Residents in the most impacted area were told to avoid vigorous physical activity and close all windows, doors and vents, turn off air conditioning and bring people and pets to an inside room because of the risk of hazardous air. Those who need to go outside in the smoky conditions should wear an N95 or P100 mask, health officials said.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Ysabel Jurado, who represents Boyle Heights, said residents want to know what materials and chemicals were in the warehouse, what burned and what is still burning. She said air quality results should include that information and be released in English and Spanish in terms that regular people can understand.

Jurado said families, workers and other residents are "seeing the smoke and smelling the odors and finding ash and debris near their homes and businesses."

"We still do not have enough clear information about what burned and what may still be burning," she said.

## **Authorities arrest 2 more suspects in planned attack on Trump's UFC show**

By REBECCA BOONE and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two more people in Missouri and Washington state have been arrested in connection with what authorities say was a planned attack targeting President Donald Trump's UFC cage-fighting show at the White House earlier this month.

Law enforcement officials disrupted the plan a few days before the June 14 White House event, according to court documents.

William Lee Spartacus Falkner of Belfair, Washington, was arrested Friday and charged with conspiracy to commit murder, according to court documents filed Monday in the Western District of Washington. Jordan W. Rincker, 28, was arrested Sunday and charged with conspiracy to commit murder in the Western District of Missouri. A defense attorney appointed to represent Falkner did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment, and court records do not reveal if Rincker has obtained an attorney. Neither man has had the opportunity to enter a plea.

"Law enforcement continues to do what it does — move to disrupt and hold accountable those allegedly plotting to do harm on the White House Grounds on June 14," Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a news release.

Law enforcement officials learned about the possible threat on June 10, four days before the mixed martial arts extravaganza on the White House's South Lawn. The Justice Department last week announced federal charges against five people from states including Ohio, Missouri, Nebraska and California. The latest arrests bring the number of people known to be facing federal charges to seven.

Officials say the group members harbored fringe conspiracy theories and hoped the attack would destabilize the government.

The investigation began after the mother of an Ohio man contacted police because she was concerned about her son's recent firearms purchases and online communications, according to an FBI affidavit filed in the case.

The man, 19-year-old Tycen Proper, told investigators that he was part of a group that wanted to trigger a revolution and target members of the government, and that they planned to fly explosive-laden drones into the event and then shoot panicked crowd members as they fled, according to the affidavit. Proper is charged with firearms offenses and crimes including attempted murder of an officer or employee of the United States.

"Mr. Proper appreciates the serious nature of the charges currently pending against him and will address them appropriately in court at the right time," Proper's attorney, Joe Patituce, said Monday. "For now, we are going to move the case forward one step at a time."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 51 of 74**

Investigators recovered high-powered firearms from several of the suspects and reviewed encrypted text messages between roughly 20 participants who shared detailed maps and aerial photographs of the area and discussed the need for a "safe house" and escape routes after the intended attack, the documents show.

But it's unclear from the court records how close the would-be attackers could have come to being able to carry out the plan had it not been thwarted.

Several suspects or co-conspirators who were questioned by the authorities said they did not intend themselves to carry out violence but planned to instead observe others. One said he would have traveled to the UFC event as a protester but had to return home after his vehicle malfunctioned. And though the participants spoke of using drones rigged with explosives, charging documents suggest they were still looking to acquire such equipment when the plot was interrupted.

Prosecutors say Rincker distributed cash to some of the conspiracy members, and that he accepted goods including weapons, a 3D printer, a computer and other items and agreed to produce drone parts. Rincker told an investigator that he didn't actually intend to help build the drones using the printer, according to an FBI affidavit, and just wanted the printer so he could make and sell crafts.

An FBI affidavit says Falkner communicated with other group members about his ability to procure and operate drones as well as what tactics and explosives to use in the plot. After news broke that the plan had been disrupted, Falkner texted another group member to say, "Work trip is canceled. My boss got picked up," and sent a link to an article detailing the initial arrests, according to the affidavit.

## **Pentagon seeks \$80 billion from Congress for Iran war**

By KEVIN FREKING and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon has told senators it needs roughly \$80 billion, mostly to cover the cost of the U.S. war against Iran, adding to what is already a sizable military spending boost being sought by President Donald Trump.

The White House Office of Management and Budget has yet to make a formal request to Congress. But Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has been making the rounds on Capitol Hill, including Monday evening. A top deputy defense secretary told senators about the Iran funding request last week, according to two people familiar with the situation but not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the developments.

Push for Pentagon money faces skeptical lawmakers

The push for billions of dollars in Iran war funding comes at a fraught political moment. Lawmakers are skeptical of the deal Trump struck with Iran to bring an end to the war, and wary of next steps. The White House has requested a remarkable \$1.5 trillion for the Pentagon — a nearly 50% increase over the current fiscal year's funding levels.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said he's expecting a supplemental spending request from the administration for the war, and when it arrives, "we'll work through it and see where the votes are."

"We need to make sure we're doing everything we can to replenish, resupply a lot of our munitions that have been depleted — not only just with what's happening with Iran, but prior to that," said Thune, R-S.D.

Deputy Defense Secretary Stephen Feinberg spoke to several senators about the proposal in calls last week and he notified congressional committees that the \$80 billion request had been sent to the Office of Management and Budget. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

However, the funding package will almost certainly run into trouble from lawmakers who refuse to support Trump's decision to go to war and are reluctant to give the Pentagon more money at a time of high costs of living for Americans at home.

"You're spending families' hard-earned tax dollars on a war that many strongly oppose," Democratic Sen. Patty Murray told Hegseth in a hearing last month.

Trump seeks a record \$1.5 trillion for Defense this year

In addition to the Iran funding, Republicans hope to secure about \$1.1 trillion through the regular ap-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 52 of 74**

propriations process, which typically requires support from both parties for approval. Then, they hope to secure an additional \$350 billion through a mostly party-line vote later this summer.

The amount being sought by the Pentagon is far higher than the \$29 billion estimate of war costs that Hegseth gave Congress during his testimony last month. The bulk of that amount was related to replacing munitions and repairing equipment but also included operational costs to keep forces deployed. That estimate did not include the cost to repair or rebuild U.S. military sites damaged in the region.

It's also far lower than the initial \$200 billion the Pentagon floated as the costs at the start of the war. An early estimate put the cost of the first week of the war at \$11.3 billion.

Sen. Brian Schatz of Hawaii, a member of Democratic party leadership, said he expects the actual price tag could be much higher than the \$80 billion being proposed.

Schatz said he hasn't done any counting of Democrats about whether there is support for an Iran-focused bill, "but I haven't found anyone who wants to do this."

But Republican Sen. Jim Banks of Indiana said, "To me it's less about the war, it's more about the stock-piles."

Banks said, "I would sell it to my state as an investment in our defense industrial base, reshoring defense production to Indiana."

Sen. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said funding for an Iran supplemental can't be done in isolation. It has to be done after lawmakers from both parties have agreed to a total spending amount for both defense and non-defense programs, "then the rest of this would follow pretty quickly," Reed said.

And Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota, a member of the Appropriations subcommittee on Defense, said he has been working with the administration to broaden the package to include funds for disaster aid for California, Hawaii and other states hard hit by fires and weather problems, as well as agricultural aid for farmers.

"I think that's the kind of combination that could pass," Hoeven said.

Hegseth declined to answer questions from reporters late Monday as he strode around the Capitol.

But on the issue of the cost of the war, Hegseth responded rhetorically during a Senate hearing last month, asking, "What is the cost of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon?"

He acknowledged the president's decision to confront the threat of a nuclear Iran "comes with cost — and we recognize that."

## **Trump-endorsed populist poised to become Colombia's next president as rival challenges vote**

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Eccentric, ostentatious and artistic, Abelardo de la Espriella is also a political neophyte who is poised to become Colombia's next president after leaning into everything that makes him different from the conventional politician to win people's support.

The businessman and lawyer, whose ventures include a clothing line, wine and rum brands, and a restaurant, earned U.S. President Donald Trump's endorsement despite never having run for office and on Monday led the presidential runoff race by 1 percentage point, or nearly 251,000 votes, with all but a fraction of the votes counted.

De la Espriella's victory, which electoral authorities are expected to declare this week, will add Colombia to a growing list of countries that have turned to political outsiders in search for solutions to complex social, security and economic challenges.

The self-proclaimed representative of "the never-before-seen" promised voters fearful of renewed internal conflict to combat violent crime with an iron fist, pledging a strategy that includes ending outgoing President Gustavo Petro's attempts to establish dialogue with multiple armed groups — an effort that has largely failed — and building mega-prisons, emulating those of Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele.

Progressive candidate Iván Cepeda, Petro's protégé, is challenging the results.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 53 of 74**

"I don't like either of them, but I'm terrified of continuity," retiree María del Rosario Villaveces, 66, said after voting Sunday in the capital, Bogota.

Villaveces, 66, added she is concerned that de la Espriella "has no idea about politics," but she said that his running mate, former finance minister José Manuel Restrepo, gives her "a little peace of mind" because "he does know (politics) and is well organized."

Petro is as much a candidate as Cepeda and de la Espriella

More than 26 million people voted in the runoff. Of those, over 426,000 people chose a third, no-name option on the ballot that allows voters to express dislike of both candidates. About 29,000 people cast blank ballots.

Will Freeman, a fellow for Latin American Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, said most voters do not perceive lack of political experience as a risk even though plenty of outsiders have failed to get much done.

"They wanted a candidate who would decisively break with Petro and the left," he said. "Part of the country was voting as much against Petro and the left as for de la Espriella, associating the left with erosion of security, economic stagnation, etc., whether or not that's fair."

De la Espriella, nicknamed "The Tiger," told thousands of supporters that he will "govern for all Colombians." But as he spoke behind a bulletproof glass Sunday night, he also echoed the frustration of many eager to see the end of Petro's presidency.

"Pack your bags and prepare to become the opposition," he told Petro's camp. "Make no mistake, Mr. Cepeda. You already know how fiercely the tiger roars."

Cepeda on Monday responded to the remarks, warning de la Espriella against threats, veiled or otherwise.

"Don't come threatening us," Cepeda said in the capital, Bogota. "Neither your roars nor your screams frighten us."

He also asked supporters to remain calm and maintain "exemplary behavior." Hours earlier, people in the western city of Cali took to the streets, damaging a public bus, several surveillance cameras and an ATM.

Voters expect security improvements

Sunday's winner will begin a four-year term Aug. 7.

The candidates pitched voters widely different strategies to prevent the South American country from the nonstop violence, such as car bombs, kidnappings, disappearances and forced displacements, that Colombians lived with in previous decades.

Yolanda Hernández, who recycles trash for a living, voted for Petro in 2022 but cast her ballot for de la Espriella this time. While she acknowledged that Petro was unable to deliver on promises meant to help the poor because of congressional gridlock, she said Colombia cannot afford another four years under his vision for the country.

"We want change in Colombia because it's always the same violence, always the same thing," Hernández, 49, said. "(Petro) said he was going to lower the cost of services, that he was going to lower the price of food, and everything is more expensive."

Last year, authorities recorded 14,780 homicides, the most since at least 2015, driven by clashes among illegal armed groups. Among those killed was conservative presidential hopeful Miguel Uribe. Colombia's illegal groups have more than 27,000 members.

De la Espriella, 47, pitched a heavy-handed approach to crime-fighting, including drug trafficking, with tactics that draw from Bukele's playbook. Those tactics have lowered homicide rates in the Central American country but have fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

De la Espriella joins list with Milei and Noboa

De la Espriella managed to defeat more experienced conservative politicians in May's first-round vote, including Sen. Paloma Valencia, who represented the party of the influential former President Álvaro Uribe. For Yann Basset, a professor of Political Science at the University of Rosario, De la Espriella's feat marks a "new stage for the Colombian right."

"There is perhaps a weariness among political figures that contributes to the success of this outsider

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 54 of 74**

populism against the political class," Basset said.

In Latin America, several presidents have achieved electoral victories with little political experience.

In Argentina, Javier Milei, a television commentator, formed a party, rose to fame and served as a congressman shortly before becoming president. In Ecuador, Daniel Noboa, an heir to a fortune built on the banana trade, entered a snap election with only months of experience as a National Assembly member and won.

De la Espriella holds dual Colombian and U.S. citizenship. He's a Trump supporter and a member of the Republican Party.

"Congratulations to 'El Tigre' (THE TIGER!) Abelardo de la Espriella, the new President of Colombia!" Trump said Monday on Truth Social. "It was my Great Honor to endorse him, and I look forward to working together to build a powerful relationship between Colombia and the United States of America, which will bring new levels of Greatness for both of our Countries!"

## **Senate passes a bipartisan housing bill aimed at increasing supply and lowering prices**

By MICHAEL CASEY and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed a bipartisan housing bill on Monday that aims to reduce federal regulations and expand local control, one of the most sweeping efforts in recent decades to increase supply and bring down prices.

The bill, which passed 85-5 and now heads to the House, has been the focus of intense negotiations in recent weeks as lawmakers in both parties try to address housing costs in an election year. The final version of the legislation bans corporate investors from buying single-family homes but doesn't include a Senate provision that would have required investors to sell newly constructed homes within seven years.

The measure was the result of years of work to "lower costs, expand housing supply, cut red tape, protect taxpayers, and help more Americans achieve the dream of homeownership," said Senate Banking Committee Chairman Tim Scott, R-S.C., who worked with Democrats to get the bill passed.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, the top Democrat on the banking panel, said it is the most significant housing bill to pass Congress since 1990, when the average home in America was sold for \$150,000. Now it costs more than \$500,000, she said.

The bill "acknowledges that the federal government has a role to play in lowering housing prices," Warren told The Associated Press. "For the first time ever, private equity will be blocked from buying up single-family homes and trying to turn housing into one more Wall Street investment."

Senate passage of the bill shapes up as a rare bipartisan legislative achievement when much of Republicans' agenda has stalled. The House is expected to give final approval later this week and send the bill to President Donald Trump, who has signaled his support.

Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters of California, who helped negotiate the legislation, said it was a "huge step toward finally addressing the affordable housing and homelessness crises in this country."

Housing costs are a concern for both parties

Republicans and Democrats have embraced the bill as a way to show they are addressing the nation's affordability crisis, driven in part by rising home prices due to a shortage of affordable housing. The U.S. housing market has been in a slump dating back to 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows.

Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes have been hovering close to a 4-million annual pace going back to 2023 — well short of the 5.2-million annual pace that's historically been the norm. Sales slowed last year to a 30-year low and have remained sluggish so far this year, declining in January and February versus a year earlier.

The Economic Report of the President in April found a shortage of 10 million homes, while a report this month from the Joint Center For Housing Studies at Harvard University found sales of existing homes were at three-decade lows and inventories were rising due to high home buying costs. "Cost burdens for both

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 55 of 74**

renters and owners continue to climb, while assistance remains profoundly underfunded," the report said. While the median U.S. monthly rent has been declining for nearly three years, it was still 17.2% higher in May than it was before the pandemic, according to data from Realtor.com.

Changes for grants, Section 8 and manufactured housing

To increase the supply of housing, the bill would streamline environmental reviews and speed up the construction process.

It would offer funding to local governments that build more housing, including Community Development Block Grant money to places exceeding the median rate of homebuilding. It would also provide new dollars for communities to turn abandoned infrastructure into housing, and offers a framework for communities that want to reform outdated zoning regulations, which often limit larger housing developments.

The legislation would allow banks to invest more in affordable housing and raise limits on the number of public housing units that can receive private financing through Section 8 funding to rehabilitate properties. And it would remove outdated requirements and expand federal financing to make manufactured homes more affordable.

"Manufactured housing produces some of the most cost-effective housing in America, but access to financing has been tightly restricted," Warren said. "This creates the opportunity for more manufactured housing and, at the same time, creates a structure for people living in manufactured housing communities to organize and protect their investment in their homes."

Lawmakers compromised on a disaster program

One of the sticking points between the two chambers was over a federal disaster recovery program.

An earlier Senate bill had permanently authorized block grant recovery funds, a change intended to ensure that funding requests aren't needed after every disaster. House lawmakers opposed that provision because of concerns over how the program was run, so they agreed on a three-year authorization instead.

The final bill has received widespread support in the housing community, both from organizations representing landlords and large property owners as well as groups that advocate for tenants and low-income renters.

"There is no magic wand that will fix this crisis overnight, and no single piece of legislation is perfect," said David Dworkin, chief executive of the National Housing Conference, the nation's oldest housing coalition.

"Compromise demands that. But this bill is a significant down payment on a long-term effort to make housing more affordable for all Americans."

## **Keith Tkachuk is elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame after his sons become NHL teammates**

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

Keith Tkachuk waited more than a decade and a half from the end of his NHL playing career to get the call from the Hockey Hall of Fame. Not known for his patience, Tkachuk was so overcome with emotion that he waited 45 minutes to tell his family.

"I said, 'Hey, you guys want to have a beer together?'" Tkachuk recalled. "And I told them and broke the news to them there."

The timing gave them even more reason to celebrate. Tkachuk was elected to the Hall of Fame on Monday, less than 24 hours after his sons became teammates when Brady was traded from Ottawa to Florida, joining older brother Matthew, during a weekend that also included a U.S. Olympic gold medal celebration and a baptism.

"It's been a great weekend for the Tkachuks," Keith said. "It's been a crazy weekend, but this tops it off. ... This is the ultimate, for sure."

The patriarch nicknamed "Walt" Tkachuk is part of a player class that includes center Patrice Bergeron, who won the Stanley Cup with Boston in 2011 and the Selke Trophy as the league's top defensive forward six times, and goaltenders Carey Price from Montreal and Pekka Rinne from Nashville.

U.S. women's hockey pioneer Cindy Curley and executive Brian Burke in the builder category also are

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 56 of 74**

set to be inducted on Nov. 9 at a ceremony in Toronto.

Tkachuk was one of the premier power forwards of his era, playing in the 1990s and 2000s as part of the first great generation of American pro players. He recorded 1,121 points in 1,290 games, counting the playoffs, with Winnipeg, Phoenix, St. Louis and Atlanta, and was part of the U.S. team that won the 1996 World Cup of Hockey.

Bergeron, who spent his entire career with the Bruins, was chosen in his first year of eligibility. Price and Rinne were selected in their second, with Henrik Zetterberg and Rod Brind'Amour among those passed over again.

"You knew what you were going to get every single time you played against him: You had to dig in," Tkachuk said of Brind'Amour, fresh off coaching Carolina to the Stanley Cup two decades after captaining the Hurricanes to a championship. "Hats off to him. He'll be here, there's no doubt in my mind, as a player and as a builder."

Price and Bergeron played together on Canada's 2014 Olympic gold medal-winning team. That was during Price's prime, which included winning the Hart Trophy as NHL MVP, Vezina as top goalie and the Lester B. Pearson as the most outstanding player as voted by his peers following a dominant 2014-15 season with the Canadiens.

"During Carey's heyday, every goalie wanted to play like him," said Rinne, who is the first player to make the Hall of Fame after spending his entire career with the Predators and is ranked in the top 25 in wins, save percentage and shutouts in league history.

Curley skated in the first International Ice Hockey Federation Women's World Championship in 1990. Her 11 goals, 12 assists and 23 points in five games remain single-tournament records, and she'll be the 15th women's player to go in the Hall at a peak of the sport with the PWHL thriving.

"When I was playing, I was I hopeful I could play on a girls team at some point," Curley said. "Seeing it progress to Olympics and now the professional (level) and seeing how great the players are, it's just wonderful."

Burke won the Stanley Cup as Anaheim's general manager in 2007, one of several front-office stops for him, along with time spent as the NHL's director of hockey operations. Burke also took on a leading role in hockey's Pride efforts and was a longtime advocate of the women's game, including a stint as executive director of the PWHL Players Association.

"They're on the same level for me," Burke said of the Cup and his off-ice advocacy. "That was just as important as anything else I've ever worked on."

## **Clive Davis, music industry starmaker, has died at 94**

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY and MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Clive Davis, the record company lawyer who became one of the music industry's most powerful figures, launching or resurrecting the careers of such superstars as Janis Joplin, Whitney Houston, Carlos Santana and Alicia Keys, has died, his family confirmed. He was 94.

Davis died in his Manhattan apartment, weeks after being hospitalized for an upper respiratory issue, his publicist Aliza Rabinoff said.

"To the world, our father was the iconic music legend whose vision, instincts, and relentless pursuit of excellence shaped the soundtrack of countless lives. He discovered, mentored, and championed the greatest artists in modern music history, leaving an indelible mark on culture that will endure for generations," the statement read.

Many artists mourned his passing on Monday. Carlos Santana called him "a visionary." Michael Bublé said the music executive "believed in people and their dreams." Patti Smith thanked Davis for a half century of "love and support."

Unlike other record moguls whose influence waned as they got older, Davis' might only seemed to grow, spanning multiple genres and labels. Into his later years, he was directing the careers of everyone from Barry Manilow to "American Idol" winners Carrie Underwood and Kelly Clarkson. And his exclusive pre-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 57 of 74**

Grammys gala, held the Saturday night before the Sunday award show every year since 1975, continued to be an institution.

"Clive's talent has always been seeing and hearing what other people don't," former President Barack Obama said in a video message played at this year's gala.

## A Brooklyn background

Clive Jay Davis was born on April 4, 1932 in Brooklyn, New York, where he grew up in the Crown Heights neighborhood. His father was an electrician and traveling salesman. He attended New York University and then Harvard Law School, eventually landing a job as an in-house lawyer at Columbia Records.

Davis always had a knack for business, and by 1967, became president of the company, just seven years after being hired as an attorney. He cited attending the Monterey International Pop Festival that year as pivotal; it eventually led him to bringing Bruce Springsteen, Chicago, Neil Diamond and many other groups to the label — bringing a counterculture spirit to a company that had resisted rock 'n' roll.

Davis took big swings in the music industry, particularly in his support for Black artists, beginning when he signed Gamble and Huff's Philadelphia International Records in 1971.

In 2015, the NAACP recognized Davis for his groundbreaking work by presenting him with the Vanguard Award. And last summer, Davis was presented with the Apollo Theater's Apollo Legacy Award and inducted onto its Walk of Fame.

## An unrivaled career

His success stories were staggering, with Houston a crowning achievement and devastating tragedy: Davis signed her to his Arista record label when she was just a teen and turned her into America's reigning pop princess.

Houston racked up multiple No. 1 hits and became one of the top-selling artists in pop history before drug abuse hobbled her career. She died in a Beverly Hills hotel room in 2012, hours before she was to appear at Davis' annual pre-Grammy Awards gala. He had been convinced she was turning her life around.

"Maybe I should have been more skeptical," Davis wrote in his 2013 memoir, "The Soundtrack of My Life," "but I've always been optimistic, and I felt hopeful. It felt like old times."

He also launched the career of multiplatinum, multiple-Grammy winner Keys — and was quick to note other talents he signed, including Joplin and Billy Joel, Blood Sweat & Tears and other "all-timers," as he so often put it.

"I signed Patti Smith, the great Renaissance woman ... I signed Lou Reed ... I signed the Grateful Dead," he proudly touted in an interview with The Associated Press in 1999.

He also signed the then up-and-coming producer Sean "Diddy" Combs to a label deal with his Bad Boy Records. Under Davis, the label would have some of its biggest successes, most notably with late rap icon the Notorious B.I.G. That was long before the hip-hop mogul Diddy would be incarcerated, convicted of violating the federal Mann Act, which bans transporting people across state lines for any sexual crime.

## An exec who built lifelong careers

Davis didn't simply have an eye for new talent — he also knew how to keep veterans relevant, decades after their first hit. Aretha Franklin, whose legend was made at Atlantic Records, flourished in her later years at Arista, as did Luther Vandross, who made his last albums for another Davis label, J Records.

It was Davis who conceived of the 1999 album "Supernatural," which paired guitar god Santana with some of the day's hottest talents. The record won a record-tying eight Grammys and gave Santana more success than he had ever enjoyed in his decades-long career.

And he had middle-aged star Rod Stewart trade in his rock hits for standards from "The Great American Songbook." The album, released in 2003, sold millions and was so successful it spawned four titles in all.

Davis didn't always make the right choices; he turned down a chance to sign up Meat Loaf. And he and his collaborators didn't always agree.

He and producer David Foster fought bitterly over the arrangement for Houston's all-time hit, a cover of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You." Davis won that fight — and the song was published with its iconic a cappella intro.

And Manilow strongly objected to recording "I Write the Songs," noting that he didn't even write the

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 58 of 74**

song, a Bruce Johnston ballad that became a signature hit for Manilow, who would have similar latter-day success mining the music of the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

"He's just brilliant at picking ideas he thinks the public will connect," raved Manilow, who had worked with Davis since he was a budding singer at Columbia Records.

But not an infallible figure

Davis also had his struggles. Though he became president of Columbia Records in 1967 after joining the label in 1960 as a lawyer, by 1973 he was gone in a bitter fallout. The label accused him of mismanagement of funds and he was fired. Although Davis says he was later cleared, it wasn't the end of his problems; he later was indicted on tax evasion charges, pleaded guilty to one count and had to pay a \$10,000 fine.

However, Davis would declare victory: He says Columbia gave him the money to start Arista to resolve the dispute, and the label would become a huge success with artists like country superstars Brooks & Dunn, sassy R&B group TLC, Babyface, Houston, Franklin and others.

The label had huge success with a debut act — Milli Vanilli. But the male pop duo would become the embarrassment of the industry when, after winning a Grammy, it was revealed that they weren't actually singing their songs (Davis blamed the debacle on the label's European division, which he said signed them; the group was later stripped of its best new artist Grammy).

In 1999, as Arista was celebrating its 25th anniversary, Davis faced another crisis: The label's then-parent company, BMG Entertainment, a division of German media conglomerate Bertelsmann, wanted him to retire; most of its executives were eased out by 60, and Davis was in his mid-60s.

In 2000, despite support from his superstar roster, the company ousted him in favor of producer and songwriter Antonio "L.A." Reid, who would later become chairman of Island/Def Jam.

Still, Davis' successes were many

However, instead of severing its ties with Davis, BMG helped him launch J Records in what BMG has described as the largest record company startup ever created. Vandross was one of his initial artists, along with forgettable acts like the boy-band O-Town.

J Records was a success from the start, though, and only grew in stature with the arrival of a young singer named Keys, a piano-playing singer-songwriter with powerful pipes and dramatic R&B songs. Keys' albums would go on to sell millions and win several Grammys.

His influence grew even more when Davis was tapped for BMG's U.S. division.

He became a key backer of the careers of the winners of "American Idol," guiding many albums to platinum status. The show's link to Sony BMG came through a deal between Davis and 19 Recordings Unlimited, the label managed by "Idol" creator Simon Fuller.

In 2007, however, Davis disagreed with the direction of Clarkson's "My December," and she publicly criticized him. The album was a flop, and she later apologized.

In 2008, Sony BMG replaced Davis as chairman and chief executive officer of the BMG label group, giving him the title of chief creative officer.

He was serving as worldwide chief creative officer at Sony Music Entertainment up until his death.

A love-filled personal life

In his memoir, Davis confirmed longtime rumors that he was bisexual and had been living with a man in recent years.

"Do I feel I could have been similarly attracted to a woman?" Davis wrote. "The answer is yes."

He is survived by his four children, sons Fred, Doug and Mitchell, daughter Lauren, and his eight grandchildren Austin, Charlie, Matthew, Hayley, Harper, Sloane, Billie and Cody, two great grandchildren, cousin Jo Schuman and partner Greg Schriefer.

His family shared a loving statement on Monday.

"Through every chapter of his remarkable life, family remained Clive's greatest pride and deepest joy. Today, we celebrate not only a towering figure whose influence changed music forever, but the man who led our family with grace, generosity, and kindness. We will miss him greatly, cherish him always, and carry his love with us for the rest of our lives."

## Supreme Court reinstates murder conviction in case of Etan Patz, missing New York City boy

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday reinstated a murder conviction in the 1979 disappearance of 6-year-old Etan Patz.

The justices, by a 6-3 vote, granted an appeal from New York prosecutors who had urged them to undo a federal appeals court decision that overturned the verdict. The three liberal justices dissented.

Prosecutors had been preparing to try the man, Pedro Hernandez, for a third time. His first trial ended in a mistrial.

The unanimous panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit reversed Hernandez' murder and kidnapping conviction in the second trial because of how the judge had answered a question from jurors.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg had called the basis for overturning the conviction "a slender reed" that essentially ignored a five-month-long trial with 66 witnesses.

The justices agreed, in an unsigned opinion, that federal courts should not second-guess state courts under a 1996 federal law that was intended to reduce federal court oversight of state criminal trials.

"The Second Circuit exceeded its authority in holding that Hernandez is entitled to relief," the justices wrote.

Hernandez, 64, has been serving a sentence of 25 years to life in prison.

Bragg hailed the high court's decision. "It's impossible to imagine the pain of losing a child, waiting so long for justice and having to brace for more proceedings," Bragg, a Democrat, said at a news conference on an unrelated issue, adding that he hoped the Patz family gained some peace of mind from the high court's ruling.

A message seeking comment was sent to Etan's father.

Hernandez' lawyers said they were "terribly disappointed" by the ruling. "We firmly believe that an innocent man is in jail for a crime that he did not commit," attorneys Harvey Fishbein and Alice Fontier said.

Hernandez made statements to confidants years ago about having killed a child or young man in New York, and he later told police he'd killed Etan. His lawyers say he confessed falsely because of a mental illness that sometimes made him hallucinate. They emphasized that his admission to police came after detectives queried him for about seven hours before reading him his rights and recording the interview. Hernandez then repeated his confession on tape, at least twice.

Etan vanished while walking to his downtown Manhattan school bus stop on May 25, 1979. Hernandez worked at a nearby convenience shop at the time, but the Maple Shade, New Jersey, resident didn't become a suspect until 2012.

Etan was among the first missing children ever to appear on milk cartons, and the anniversary of his disappearance became National Missing Children's Day.

Hernandez already has been tried twice. A jury deadlocked in 2015, and then a different panel of jurors convicted him at a 2017 retrial.

During deliberations, the 2017 jurors asked a complicated question: If they decided Hernandez didn't confess voluntarily when he hadn't been read his rights yet, must they disregard his other confessions? The then-judge responded simply, "the answer is no." The jury went on to convict.

In overturning that verdict, the appeals court said the jury's question should have gotten a more fulsome answer, including the possibility of discounting all the confessions.

Hernandez' retrial had been expected to start in September, and his lawyers and prosecutors were due to give the trial judge a status update next week.

Asked about next steps, Bragg said prosecutors would await guidance from appellate judges and the state trial court that has handled the case.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 60 of 74

## Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan dies at 100

By PAUL WISEMAN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alan Greenspan, the jazz-playing U.S. Federal Reserve chair who was celebrated for engineering a decade of prosperity but later shared the blame for a devastating financial crisis, died Monday. He was 100.

Greenspan died from complications of Parkinson's disease, said his wife of 29 years, NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell.

"To me he was my husband, who shaped my life from our very first date in 1984," Mitchell wrote. "He had 'irrational exuberance' for baseball, the Washington Commanders, tennis, golf, and music, especially jazz. He will be remembered for his brilliance and his kindness. Being his life partner was the joy of my life."

The Fed said Greenspan helped to cement trust in the Fed during a time of economic uncertainty.

"Under his leadership, the Federal Reserve achieved a sustained era of price stability that supported economic growth and helped anchor the public's confidence in the institution," the central bank said in a statement Monday.

Greenspan was hailed as "Maestro" — before crisis hit

In 18 1/2 years at the Fed, Greenspan presided over a breathtaking surge in stock prices and a 10-year economic boom that started in March 1991. He was celebrated as "Maestro" and "Oracle" — an economic virtuoso whose every utterance was dissected for clues on where interest rates and the economy were headed.

The intense scrutiny of Greenspan's intentions gave birth to new Fed folklore: the "Briefcase Indicator." A stuffed briefcase carried into Fed meetings implied changes might be afoot because Greenspan carried with him charts and research to make his point.

But his reputation began to suffer almost as soon as he left the Fed in 2006. American housing prices tumbled rapidly, causing huge losses for banks that had repackaged mortgage loans into a dizzying array of complex securities. The growing financial crisis pushed the U.S. economy into the Great Recession of 2007-2009 — the deepest downturn since the 1930s.

Critics blamed the devastation on Greenspan's easy money policies and his support for deregulated financial markets. Greenspan himself later acknowledged "I made a mistake" in assuming that banks could essentially regulate themselves.

Greenspan became the authoritative voice on the US economy

For almost two decades, it seemed that Greenspan could do no wrong. Not only in the United States but across the world, he was regarded with a mixture of reverence and awe. Many openly dreaded the day when he would leave the Fed.

Investors hung on his sometimes inscrutable observations. In the most well-known such remark, Greenspan sent financial markets reeling on Dec. 5, 1996, when he suggested with just two words — "irrational exuberance" — that stock prices were too high.

Mindful of his power to move markets, Greenspan typically resorted to obfuscation. At times, he even joked about his habit of doing so. "I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant," Greenspan once told a befuddled congressional committee.

Greenspan was one of the few Fed chairs that Kevin Warsh, chosen by Trump to lead the Fed, praised at his swearing-in last month. Warsh has said one of his goals is to dial back the Fed's communications, particularly the guidance it gives financial markets, an approach closer to Greenspan's than to Warsh's immediate predecessors as chair.

Yet for all his circumspect comments, Greenspan did make the Fed more transparent. He was the first chair to issue a statement explaining the Fed's interest-rate decisions. Before Greenspan, investors had to divine the Fed's intentions from market changes. Greenspan also began to release minutes and even full transcripts of meetings, though those changes were in response to pressure from Congress.

A protégé is born

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 61 of 74**

Born in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, the young Greenspan was a math whiz who was trotted out by his mother to show off for visitors.

"I was a prop at parties," he said in a 2007 interview with PBS NewsHour. A Julliard School dropout, he worked as a professional musician in his teens, playing clarinet and saxophone alongside the future jazz great Stan Getz. It was a humbling experience that persuaded the young Greenspan to seek another line of work.

He pursued undergraduate and graduate study in economics at New York University, eventually earning a doctorate there. For most of three decades, he ran an economic consulting firm. During the 1950s, he became a disciple of the libertarian philosopher Ayn Rand, who stuck him with the nickname the "Under-taker" for his dark clothes and quiet bearing. When Greenspan was sworn in as President Gerald Ford's chief economic adviser in 1974, Rand stood beside him.

**An early trial for a new Fed chair**

President Ronald Reagan tapped Greenspan to run the Fed in 1987. He was tested almost immediately. On Oct. 19, 1987, which came to be known as "Black Monday," the stock market suffered the worst one-day percentage loss in American history just two months into his term. The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 22.6% for reasons that remain opaque to this day.

Greenspan was credited for helping restore stability. He assured Wall Street that the Fed would supply as much money to the financial system as was needed to restore calm. Stocks recovered, and the American economy emerged unscathed by the market crash.

During his tenure at the Fed, Greenspan drew praise for presiding over what was at the time the longest economic expansion in American history. (It was later surpassed by a 128-month expansion that ran from June 2009 through February 2020.) During Greenspan's tenure at the Fed, the nation's unemployment rate briefly dropped below 4% for the first time since 1970.

And inflation, which had bedeviled the United States and much of the global economy during the 1970s, was remarkably dormant during Greenspan's chairmanship, something many economists thought impossible for so long a period.

During the long boom, Greenspan argued that improvements in technology had made the economy so efficient that it could run faster and at lower rates of unemployment, without unleashing inflation. As a consequence, the theory went, the Fed could keep interest rates low even when the economy was roaring.

The economy soared in the late 1990s, expanding by 4% or more for four straight years, and Greenspan was credited with holding off on rate hikes and allowing the boom to run.

Warsh has said that AI could reproduce the 1990s experience of high growth with low inflation, though economists are skeptical it will play out the same way.

**A passion for numbers and life**

As Fed chair, Greenspan relished poring over obscure economic data, from monthly boxcar loadings to steel production, all in a bid to assess where the economy was going. He would often phone economists at other government agencies to discuss details. He would rise early each morning for a two-hour soak in his bathtub, time that he used to review statistics and Fed staff memos.

Improbably, Greenspan also made the gossip pages as an unlikely ladies' man. He dated the television journalist Barbara Walters and later married Mitchell after a 12-year courtship. They had no children.

Greenspan dated Walters while working as an adviser to President Gerald Ford. According to a biography of Greenspan, "The Man Who Knew" by Sebastian Mallaby, when Ford read a newspaper item about the pair, he cut it out and sent it to his chief of staff, Dick Cheney, with a note that said, "I don't believe it."

**A strong faith in self-regulating markets is challenged**

All along, Greenspan held fast to the belief that financial markets could largely regulate themselves. With officials from President Bill Clinton's White House, he helped block efforts by Brooksley Born, the nation's top commodities regulator, to bring federal oversight in the late 1990s to the shadowy market in over-the-counter derivatives. The derivatives allowed speculators to make bets on everything from the price of oil to high-risk mortgages.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 62 of 74**

Eventually, history would vindicate Born, not the Maestro.

The low interest rates Greenspan had engineered helped swell housing prices into a dangerous bubble. And the financial deregulation he supported allowed banks and other financial firms to pile up huge risks, often hidden from government supervision. Bad derivatives bets helped sink insurance giant American International Group, which required a \$180 billion taxpayer bailout. Vaunted investment firms Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers failed and U.S. financial markets nearly collapsed.

The Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, which was assigned to investigate the debacle by Congress, concluded:

"More than 30 years of deregulation and reliance on self-regulation by financial institutions, championed by former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan and others ... had stripped away key safeguards, which could have helped avoid catastrophe."

Life after the Fed

In the years after stepping down as Fed chairman in 2006 just shy of his 80th birthday, Greenspan kept busy doing what he loved to do most — following the economic data. He ran his own consulting firm, Greenspan Associates, through which he dispensed advice to Wall Street clients and collected handsome speaking fees.

He kept up a busy schedule well into his 90s, writing his memoir and two other books on the economy, as well as opining on the latest economic developments on television news shows.

He also signed onto opinion articles and statements defending the Federal Reserve's political independence from President Donald Trump's ongoing attacks. In January 2026 he signed a statement criticizing the Trump administration's investigation of Fed Chair Jerome Powell. The statement, which was also signed by two other former Fed chairs and five former Treasury secretaries, called the investigation "an unprecedented attempt to use prosecutorial attacks to undermine" the Fed's independence and warned it would have "highly negative consequences for inflation."

In his 2013 book "The Map and the Territory," Greenspan defended himself against critics who assigned him significant blame for the 2008 financial meltdown. He argued that traditional economic forecasting was no match for the irrational risk-taking that can feed catastrophic price bubbles.

"Bubbles go up very slowly as euphoria builds," Greenspan said in a 2013 interview with The Associated Press. "Then fear hits, and it comes down very sharply. When I started to look at that, I was sort of intellectually shocked."

## **Mavericks are hiring national champ coach Dusty May away from Michigan, AP source says**

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks and Dusty May of national champion Michigan are finalizing a deal for the coach to make the jump from college to the NBA, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Monday.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the deal wasn't completed.

May and the Wolverines won their first NCAA championship since 1989 with a 69-63 victory over UConn in April to wrap up a 34-3 season. They opened the NCAA Tournament by becoming the first team ever to score at least 90 points in five consecutive games.

That came three years after May led Florida Atlantic to its only Final Four appearance. The Owls returned to the NCAA Tournament in 2024 before May was hired by Michigan.

The 49-year-old May replaces Jason Kidd, who was let go two weeks after Masai Ujiri was hired as president of basketball operations and alternate governor of the Mavericks.

He comes to the NBA with a chance to mold 2025 No. 1 overall draft pick and reigning Rookie of the Year Cooper Flagg. Veteran star Kyrie Irving is also on the roster for now after missing the entire 2025-26 season following an ACL tear in March of last year.

May's first job as a college assistant was at Murray State in 2005-06. He then served on staffs at UAB,

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 63 of 74**

Louisiana Tech and Florida before getting his first head coaching job at Florida Atlantic.

The Owls went 35-4 during their dream season in 2022-23, which ended with a 72-71 loss to San Diego State in the national semifinals when Lamont Butler hit a buzzer-beating shot for the Aztecs.

"I was a fan of Dusty's when he was at FAU," said Yaxel Lendeborg, who played for May at Michigan and is expected to be a lottery pick in the first round of the NBA draft on Tuesday night. "And now, after playing for him, I'm a bigger fan. I have so much respect for Dusty May, I can't even tell you."

Lendeborg said at last month's draft combine that he believed May ran Michigan's program like an NBA program in many ways.

"A lot of schemes, a lot of switching and stuff. And his offense was very much a pro-style offense," Lendeborg said. "We played fast-paced, physical, all of that. ... I've gained so much knowledge from him as far as those actions and just those little communication keys."

May's rise in coaching has been meteoric, particularly after the last four seasons.

He took over at Florida Atlantic in 2018 and had four consecutive seasons of finishing just over .500 — before striking gold in the 2022-23 season, going 35-4 and taking the Owls on that improbable Final Four run.

May went 25-9 at FAU the following season, then went to Michigan and brought the Wolverines back to prominence. He was 64-13 in his two seasons after replacing Juwan Howard with Michigan coming off an 8-24 season, the school's lowest win total since going 7-20 in 1981-82.

Michigan went 27-10 in May's debut, won the Big Ten Conference Tournament and made it to the NCAA Sweet 16.

May's record in his last four college seasons was 124-26, an .827 winning percentage that was third best in all of major college men's basketball over that span behind Houston's Kelvin Sampson (.861) and Duke's Jon Scheyer (.832).

The Indiana native was a student manager for the Hoosiers and coach Bob Knight while he was in school there from 1996-2000. He gained experience in scouting, video operations and player development while with the Hall of Fame coach, who died in 2023.

After graduating from Indiana, May spent two seasons as an administrative assistant and video coordinator at Southern California. He returned to the Hoosiers in similar roles from 2002-05.

## **Judge says roommate of Charlie Kirk murder suspect won't testify in person at preliminary hearing**

By MATTHEW BROWN and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

The Utah judge in the murder case of Charlie Kirk's killing has denied a defense request to force Tyler Robinson's former roommate to testify in person during the preliminary hearing, saying that the credibility of any testimony can be challenged later if the case goes to trial.

Judge Tony Graf made the ruling during a hearing Monday morning, saying the purpose of a preliminary hearing is to establish whether there is enough evidence to justify bringing the case to trial, not to determine whether someone is innocent or guilty.

Graf also postponed a ruling on whether prosecutors could face sanctions for comments to the media about a bullet fragment recovered from the conservative activist's body until Friday. The defense team had asked Judge Tony Graf to block the death penalty in the case, claiming the prosecutors' comments could sway potential jurors regarding his guilt.

Robinson, 23, has not yet entered a plea. He is charged with aggravated murder in the Sept. 10 killing of Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump who was shot in the neck while addressing a crowd of thousands at Utah Valley University.

Prosecutors have said DNA consistent with Robinson's was found on the trigger of the rifle, the fired cartridge casing and two unfired cartridges. Defense attorneys note that forensic reports indicate multiple people's DNA was found on some items, which they say requires a more complex analysis.

Robinson reportedly texted his roommate, who was also his romantic partner, that he targeted Kirk

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 64 of 74

because he "had enough of his hatred," prosecutors have said.

Robinson's defense team asked the judge to block prosecutors from using recorded statements from the roommate in the preliminary hearing, set to begin on July 6. The roommate should be brought to testify in person, the defense attorneys said, so that Robinson can exercise his right to confront witnesses in person and challenge their credibility. But Graf denied that request, saying the time for challenging witnesses will come later.

"The Utah Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized that a preliminary hearing is not a trial on the merits, but a gateway to the finder of fact," Graf said. The task of determining whether a witness is credible is a job for the jury if the case goes to trial, he said.

The case has attracted widespread attention, and online speculation and conspiracy theories grew after the defense team disclosed in public court documents that initial tests were inconclusive to determine whether the bullet was fired from the suspected murder weapon.

Conjecture over that evidence fueled unsubstantiated conspiracy theories that there might have been a second shooter, or that his death was staged. Attorneys on both sides have raised concerns that the misinformation and extensive media attention could taint the potential jury pool.

Judge Graf held a hearing earlier this month over whether prosecutors should be held in contempt for their comments about the bullet.

Robinson's attorneys accused prosecutors including Deputy Utah County Attorney Christopher Ballard of trying to influence potential jurors by going on a "media tour" to talk about ballistics evidence in the case.

Ballard argued at the June 12 hearing that he didn't speak to the media about case specifics, and he only remarked generally about how ballistics testing can be inconclusive.

## Federal judge halts Trump administration effort to subpoena Walz in immigration enforcement probe

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, ERIC TUCKER and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

A federal judge has blocked an attempt by the Trump administration to subpoena Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and other state officials, accusing the Justice Department of using its investigatory powers to retaliate against state officials for not cooperating with federal efforts to crack down on illegal immigration.

In a ruling unsealed Monday, U.S. District Judge Patrick Schiltz found the "dominant purpose" of the subpoenas was to "coerce Minnesota officials into assisting the federal government with enforcing civil immigration law and to harass and retaliate against them for failing to do so."

Tensions between the Trump administration and Minnesota's Democratic leaders escalated in January as federal immigration officers clashed with protesters in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, especially after officers' fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti.

President Donald Trump even threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act to quell protests and accused Walz, who was Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris' running mate in 2024, and others of encouraging protesters to disrupt Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity.

Judge finds 'weak to nonexistent' reasons for subpoenas

The subpoenas seeking records were served in January as part of an investigation into whether Walz and other officials obstructed or impeded law enforcement actions. They were sent to the offices of Walz, Attorney General Keith Ellison, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, St. Paul Mayor Kaohly Her and officials in Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

The ruling is the latest rebuke by the federal judiciary of Justice Department efforts to aggressively implement the Trump administration agenda in courts and target the president's political adversaries through subpoenas and similar demands.

The judge ruled that there appeared to be "extremely weak to nonexistent" connections between the information sought in the subpoenas and any possible criminal violation. The subpoenas seek materials "that largely if not entirely relate to constitutionally protected conduct," the judge wrote, noting that Minnesota has the legal right not to devote its resources to enforcing federal immigration law.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 65 of 74**

The Justice Department "is not conducting a criminal investigation," the judge wrote, "but is instead using the grand jury process for other (unlawful) purposes."

The evidence that the subpoenas were issued for unlawful reasons is overwhelming, the judge said, arguing that the Justice Department "has struggled — without success — to identify a single plausible investigatory justification" for them.

The Justice Department said in a statement that it "takes the unlawful obstruction of federal law enforcement operations extremely seriously and will continue to act in full compliance with the law to investigate these matters."

Targets hail the judge's decision

Walz, in a statement, called the ruling "a victory for the rule of law and our democracy."

"The U.S. Justice Department is pursuing criminal investigations into the President's political opponents," said Walz, the 2024 Democratic nominee for vice president. "This case was just one example of that, but we are seeing daily reminders of this administration's lawlessness — in Minnesota and around the country. We all must continue to seek justice and uphold the rule of law."

Ellison said "it should disturb every American that Donald Trump is weaponizing the criminal justice system against people he disagrees with."

The subpoenas are "a politically motivated retaliation against our city for lawfully standing up to ICE and fighting for our residents," Her said in a statement.

Frey said the investigation was "never about justice, law, and order, but the absence of it."

"Subpoenaing political opponents because they spoke on behalf of their constituents violates the core tenets of our democracy and human decency," he said.

Frey also observed that criticizing government action is not a crime.

"One of the defining strengths of our democracy is the ability to challenge those in power without fear of retribution. Elected officials have both the right and the responsibility to speak honestly about how government decisions affect the people they serve," he said.

Subpoenas were among many federal actions against Minnesota officials

Over the last year, judges have dismissed indictments against two prominent Trump foes, former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James, and grand juries have repeatedly refused to return indictments sought by the Justice Department.

The moves reflect mounting public concerns that the Justice Department, an institution meant to make investigative and prosecution decisions independent of the White House, is being politicized under the current Trump administration.

Vice President JD Vance has separately called on the Justice Department to investigate Walz and Ellison over allegations they failed to stop widespread social services fraud, though the department has not said whether it will open an investigation. Walz and Ellison have described those allegations as politically motivated and defended their efforts to combat fraud in Minnesota.

Meanwhile, other legal battles related to the immigration surge continue. The federal government has suggested Minnesota prosecutors don't have jurisdiction to investigate federal officers.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty in March sued the administration for access to evidence in the Good and Pretti killings, accusing the administration of withholding evidence from state investigators. Moriarty also has pursued criminal charges against ICE officers in two other incidents, including the non-fatal shooting of a Venezuelan man, and suggests her office is investigating several other cases as well.

## **Ukraine and Russia exchange deadly strikes, with at least one child killed**

By VOLODYMYR YURCHUK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian drone strike on the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine killed three members of the same family, including a 13-year-old boy, while a Ukrainian strike on a Russian industrial plant killed five people, officials said Monday.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 66 of 74**

Russia has pounded civilian areas of Ukraine with drones and missiles since its all-out invasion more than four years ago. Ukraine increasingly has struck back against oil facilities and military factories deep inside Russia.

A United Nations tally says more than 16,000 civilians have died in the war. U.S.-led peace efforts have failed to stop the fighting.

The Sumy attack hit a home and killed a 36-year-old man, his son and the 73-year-old mother of his partner, according to Oleh Hryhorov, the head of the regional military administration. The man's partner and 10-year-old son were wounded, he said.

"An ordinary home — not a military target whatsoever," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X.

The Ukrainian missile attack on the industrial plant in Voronezh in southwestern Russia killed five people and injured dozens, Gov. Alexander Gusev said. He did not name the plant.

Ukraine's General Staff said it hit a Voronezh factory that produces electronic parts for Russian missile and air defense systems.

Ukraine's monthly civilian casualties are highest in 4 years

The number of civilian casualties in Russian attacks has jumped recently, according to the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, as Moscow's forces struggle to gain momentum on the battlefield.

At least 274 civilians were killed and 1,763 injured in Ukraine in May, the highest monthly total of civilian casualties since April 2022, the mission said earlier this month. Most casualties are in cities far from the front line, it said.

A Russian nighttime drone strike killed a woman and wounded three people, including an 11-year-old boy, in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, regional head Ivan Fedorov said.

Russia launched 88 long-range attack drones and one ballistic missile overnight, Ukraine's air force said, with air defenses shooting down or jamming 79 of the drones.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces intercepted 301 Ukrainian drones during the night over multiple Russian regions, the Crimea peninsula, the Azov Sea and the Black Sea.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said 84 Ukrainian drones targeting the Russian capital were shot down. He didn't mention any damage, but all four Moscow airports temporarily halted flights.

The success of Ukraine's long-range campaign against oil facilities, military transport and infrastructure has prompted Russian-held Crimea to halt civilian gasoline sales.

And all summer camps in illegally annexed Crimea on Monday stopped accepting children and new bookings until Sept. 1 for security reasons, said the Russian-installed governor of the occupied peninsula, Sergei Aksyonov.

## **France sizzles in punishing heat that is already causing deaths**

By JOHN LEICESTER and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France gritted its teeth Monday for a week of record-busting temperatures, sweltering in a heat wave with daytime highs above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) and sleep-robbing sweaty nights.

The national weather service, Météo France, said most of the country — the largest in the European Union — was entering conditions that likely won't ease before Friday.

Météo France called the heat wave exceptionally intense and similar to the August 2003 heat wave, "but with a still uncertain duration." France introduced a heat watch warning system after that heat wave, when the highest temperatures in over half a century caused an estimated 15,000 deaths, many of older people in apartments and retirement homes without air conditioning.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing at twice the speed as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Human-caused climate change is tied to increasing extreme weather, and U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years should shatter more heat records.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 67 of 74**

A country with little air-conditioning swelters

Several towns across France experienced their hottest day ever on Monday. Paris baked through its hottest night for June, not getting below 24.2 C (75.5 F). The French capital broke another June record with 37.7 C (99.9 F) recorded Monday afternoon.

"This will continue through the end of the week, with heat levels never before recorded across more than three-quarters of the country on Wednesday and Thursday," the weather service said.

The heat wave worsened air quality in Paris as it causes the formation of ozone that traps pollution. The air quality monitoring agency in the Paris region said pollutants were likely to exceed the recommended threshold.

In a country without widespread air-conditioning, people tried to adapt. Education minister Edouard Geffray said 1,352 schools were closed on Monday due to the heat, while several thousand adjusted their schedules, with students released earlier and classes relocated in air-conditioned rooms.

Deaths are reported in rivers and a parked car

A growing swath of France, spreading on Monday to more than half its regions, was under a "red alert" for heat, with areas forecast to suffer highs past 40 C and nights not dropping below 20 C.

Broadcasts on the Paris transport network urged commuters to hydrate. Medical specialists warned of the potentially deadly combination of drinking alcohol in extreme heat. Authorities cracked down on alcohol consumption in public.

Multiple drownings were reported as people sought relief in rivers, despite warnings about currents and other dangers.

Two children, aged 2 and 4, died on Monday after being found unconscious in their family's car in the southern town of Carpentras, according a statement from the public prosecutor. According to initial findings, they had locked themselves inside the vehicle. An investigation was opened under the offense of involuntary manslaughter. Government messages warned parents not to leave children unattended in cars.

Heat warnings spread in Europe

In the United Kingdom, the weather office issued a rare "red" weather warning for Wednesday and Thursday, saying temperatures could exceed 37 C (99 F) in the shade and could rise to 40 C in parts of England and Wales.

The Met Office said extreme temperatures could cause heat-sensitive equipment to fail, including power and mobile phone services.

Over the last four years, more than 200,000 people across Europe died from heat-related causes, and most of those were preventable, the World Health Organization's Europe office said this month. The above-average temperatures can cause heat exhaustion and life-threatening heat stroke.

The EU monitoring agency found that in Europe and globally, 2024 was the hottest year on record and the continent experienced its second-highest number of "heat stress" days.

Scientists warn that climate change is exacerbating the frequency and intensity of heat and dryness, especially in southeastern Europe, making the region more vulnerable to health impacts and wildfires.

The burning of gasoline, oil and coal, plus deforestation, wildfires and many kinds of factories, release heat-trapping gasses that cause climate change.

## **Starmer says he'll resign as UK prime minister, roiling British politics yet again**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Monday he will resign, forced out by his own party after missteps and mistakes soured voters' goodwill following a landslide election victory two years ago on a promise of steady leadership and economic growth.

Starmer says he will remain caretaker prime minister until his Labour Party chooses a new leader — with expectations growing that it will be former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham.

Burnham confirmed on social media that "I will put myself forward as part of this process." Former Health

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 68 of 74**

Secretary Wes Streeting, who was considered his main rival for the top job, said he will back Burnham.

It was Burnham's victory in a special parliamentary election last week that triggered Starmer's decision to resign, as Labour lawmakers flocked to the charismatic former mayor in the hope he can revive the party's fortunes. After nearly a decade as mayor of the northwestern city, Burnham returned Monday to Parliament, where he took the oath of office in the House of Commons. Only members of Parliament are eligible for the party leadership.

Streeting's statement makes it more likely that Burnham will be selected without a leadership contest.

Burnham was cheered loudly by lawmakers — and heckled by one, who shouted "He's not the Messiah!" — as he was sworn in, before posing for selfies and a group photo with dozens of Labour MPs in another part of Parliament.

Britain's next election does not have to be held until 2029. Asked if he would call an early vote if he becomes prime minister, Burnham said: "You're jumping several hurdles ahead there."

Starmer is the sixth prime minister in a decade to stand outside No. 10 Downing St., and announce a departure. His statement came the day before Britain marks the 10th anniversary of its vote to leave the European Union, a decision that still roils the country's economy and politics.

After weeks of insisting he would fight to keep his job, Starmer conceded to growing pressure to hand over to a new leader who can try and revive the government's flagging fortunes. He led Labour to a landslide election victory in July 2024, but since then his popularity and that of the party have plummeted.

A new leader in place within weeks

Starmer made the announcement outside his official residence, where he delivered his first speech as prime minister two years ago. His voice choked with emotion near the end of the brief statement, which was watched by his staff, Cabinet ministers and scores of journalists.

"The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election," Starmer said. "I have heard the answer of my parliamentary party to that question, and I accept that answer with good grace."

He said he spoke to King Charles III, Britain's constitutional monarch, to inform him of the decision.

Starmer spent the weekend pondering his future following Burnham's special election victory.

Starmer said nominations for a leadership contest will open July 9, and the new leader will be in place by the time Parliament returns from its summer break on Sept. 1.

If Burnham is the only candidate, the change could come by mid-July.

Starmer struggled to fulfill election pledges

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

Labour is losing liberal voters to the growing Green Party and facing a rising Reform UK, the Nigel Farage-led anti-immigration party that consistently leads in nationwide opinion polls.

U.S. President Donald Trump weighed in even before an announcement, linking Starmer's exit to two of the Republican leader's recurring grievances: immigration and renewable energy.

"Keir Starmer will resign as Prime Minister of The United Kingdom. He failed badly on two very important subjects- IMMIGRATION AND ENERGY (OPEN NORTH SEA OIL!). I wish him well! President DJT," Trump posted on his social media platform.

Starmer's initially warm relationship with Trump has soured in recent months over issues including the Iran war, which the U.K. didn't join.

Praised on the world stage

In contrast to missteps domestically, Starmer has won praise for his international role, notably in rallying European support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion, and working to mitigate the economic and political turmoil unleashed by the Iran conflict.

A NATO summit in Turkey next month may be his last foray on the world stage as Britain's leader.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, posting on X, thanked Starmer for his support and cooperation "that have helped make our Europe and our protection of life stronger."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 69 of 74**

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen praised Starmer's legacy.

"It can take many leaders years to grow into the statesman you became in just two years," she said on X. "European and Ukrainian security is stronger because of you. Thank you, dear Keir."

While many Labour lawmakers have rallied behind Burnham, some have said that Starmer had been treated unfairly. London legislator Neil Coyle railed on X against "the prospect of an utter stitch-up & the media circus being rewarded."

Many hope Burnham can connect with voters

Burnham is the front-runner to succeed Starmer because many people see him as the best person to defeat the anti-immigration Reform Party at the next election, said Olivia O'Sullivan, an analyst at London's Chatham House think tank.

Burnham appeals to Labour Party lawmakers who were frustrated by the way Starmer has governed, O'Sullivan said. Many hope that he will set out a "clearer vision" and connect with voters in parts of the country that are in danger of turning to Reform.

Still, O'Sullivan cautioned that may not translate into genuine change.

"It's absolutely correct that that is not the same thing as offering a radically different set of policies or even a particularly clear policy program," she said.

## **Staggering amounts of fentanyl hit streets as the DEA watched and took no action, records show**

By JIM MUSTIAN and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Even as it battled the deadliest drug epidemic in American history, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration permitted hundreds of thousands of fentanyl pills to hit the streets of New Mexico between 2023 and 2025, according to three current and former DEA agents and government records reviewed by The Associated Press.

DEA agents repeatedly monitored shipments of fentanyl pills — but did not seize them — as federal prosecutors sought to bring bigger criminal cases against traffickers of a synthetic opioid that the White House last year designated a "weapon of mass destruction."

Agents and experts, however, said the tactic amounted to a gamble with public safety that potentially imperiled communities in and around Albuquerque and may have violated U.S. Justice Department rules intended to safeguard the public.

"We poisoned our community to make cases," DEA Special Agent David Howell told AP in a series of interviews in New Mexico. "Through our own willful blindness, we get to say, 'We don't really know what happened to the drugs.' But we 100% got people killed."

The DEA has long contended it would not be plausible to seize every shipment of every drug. But the strategy of allowing staggering amounts of counterfeit painkillers to hit the streets shocked several veteran agents who spoke with AP.

Ridding the streets of illicit fentanyl, manufactured mostly in Mexican labs, became the DEA's top priority over the past decade as overdose deaths surged. At the same time, its lethality — a few milligrams can kill the average adult — upended time-tested tactics that had been used to combat drugs like cocaine and heroin. Those methods have included allowing drug transactions to be completed so agents might follow the narcotics through the supply chain. Fentanyl, however, is so dangerous that the Justice Department developed guidelines for agents in such circumstances, encouraging them to seize the opioid whenever "practicable."

Albuquerque, which has a neighborhood so besieged by drugs it's known as "War Zone," and other regions in New Mexico remain at the epicenter of the fentanyl epidemic. While overdose deaths nationwide fell 14% last year, government data show New Mexico tallied a 21% spike.

New Mexico became a testing ground for a high-stakes strategy

Alex Uballez, who served as U.S. attorney in New Mexico from 2022 through last year, said authorities at times allowed drug shipments to go unseized as part of a broader effort to gather intelligence and build

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 70 of 74**

cases against major drug traffickers. He said the approach reflected his office's limited resources and his belief that prosecuting larger organizations can have a bigger impact than interdicting every suspected drug transaction.

Last year, the DEA recorded the largest fentanyl bust in its history in Albuquerque.

"The bigger fish are worth catching," Uballez said, "and that will save more lives."

The DEA said in a statement that "the investigative decisions at issue were lawful, reasonable under the circumstances and consistent with Department guidance."

"Public descriptions suggesting that DEA knowingly permitted fentanyl to reach communities are false and fundamentally mischaracterize the facts," DEA spokesperson Amanda Wozniak wrote in an email. She said the investigations involved court-authorized wiretaps "in which agents and prosecutors conducted real-time surveillance, intelligence gathering, and operational analysis targeting larger drug trafficking organizations."

Agents watched tens of thousands of fentanyl pills change hands

In some cases, the DEA had such detailed intelligence about drug deliveries that agents were able to tally precise pill counts, according to reports reviewed by AP.

Agents, for example, deciphered coded chatter over cellphones and closely surveilled a transaction at a mobile home park in Albuquerque in June 2023, according to a 66-page report reviewed by AP. Agents wrote in the report that traffickers delivered 74,000 pills as part of that deal, a figure federal prosecutors later confirmed in a court filing.

Days earlier, another DEA report showed, investigators watched the same distribution ring deliver a spare tire hiding another suspected fentanyl shipment that similarly went unseized.

"We did nothing but sit back and watch," said Howell, who filed an official whistleblower complaint in 2023 to bring attention to what he thought was a tactic that risked public safety.

Months passed before federal authorities busted the traffickers, and Howell, who participated in the surveillance, said authorities today cannot account for the unseized shipments.

"It's outrageous to put that many lives at risk in hopes of making a big case," said Tristan Leavitt, president of Empower Oversight, a whistleblower advocacy group that has asked the Senate Judiciary Committee and Justice Department's Office of Inspector General to investigate Howell's claims.

A former DEA supervisor, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, said he and his Albuquerque colleagues allowed "millions" of pills to go unseized during a multistate investigation last year.

Howell reported in his whistleblower disclosures that agents on that case permitted the delivery of at least 1.8 million fentanyl pills.

That investigation, the former supervisor and Howell told AP, culminated in the largest fentanyl bust in DEA history, a takedown announced in May 2025 by then-Attorney General Pam Bondi that resulted in the seizure of more than 3 million pills.

"The amount we ultimately seized was hitting the streets every month while that case was going on," the former supervisor said, adding that the DEA could have dismantled the organization six months earlier.

Authorities said bigger cases justified the risk

The U.S. attorney's office in Albuquerque did not answer questions about the unseized fentanyl shipments but, in a statement to AP, said the "conduct" Howell brought to light happened during the prior administration.

"The current leadership of this office is focused on aggressively investigating and prosecuting fentanyl trafficking and disrupting the criminal organizations responsible for distributing these drugs," Tessa DuBerry, a spokesperson for the office, wrote in an email.

Uballez, the former U.S. attorney, said estimated pill counts "based on intercepted phone calls are not reliable."

"I don't think I'd contest that drugs are 'walked,'" he said, referring to the law enforcement tactic of allowing contraband to go unseized to further an investigation. "How much and how frequently — and with what certainty — is incredibly difficult to answer in retrospect."

Federal guidelines treated fentanyl as a special case

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 71 of 74**

As fentanyl overdoses became an epidemic over the past decade, the U.S. Justice Department developed an internal playbook for combating the deadliest drug ever to cross the Mexican border. The game plan coincided with a publicity campaign that warned Americans that "One Pill Can Kill," a DEA effort to highlight fentanyl's unique dangers.

Adopted in 2017, the department's two-page "Fentanyl Protocols" called on agents to "seize or otherwise prevent the distribution" of fentanyl "as soon as practicable." The rules, which have not previously been made public, said that "protecting public safety is paramount," irrespective of whether seizures compromise investigations.

The Justice Department rewrote the rules in 2024 to afford law enforcement more discretion in such cases. The updated protocols say investigators "may exercise discretion in determining whether to take action to prevent the trafficking of fentanyl," balancing public safety risks against "the benefits to be achieved through preserving the investigation."

The DEA rarely discusses the tactic of allowing drugs to go unseized. Its agent manual describes taking drugs off the street as "the usual course of action," but adds "there may be instances where the investigative objectives can be better achieved by not doing so."

The agency has long used "controlled deliveries" in which constant surveillance of the drugs — and often replacing them with fake narcotics — is followed by a takedown to recover them, according to current and former agents.

In interviews, several current and former agents likened the decision to permit fentanyl to hit the streets to the infamous "Operation Fast and Furious," a 2011 gun-walking scandal in which straw buyers smuggled some 2,000 assault weapons into Mexico with the intent of tracing the firearms to cartel leaders.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was savaged with bipartisan criticism after two of those guns surfaced at the scene of a fatal shooting of a Border Patrol agent, and the Justice Department explicitly forbade agents from allowing firearms to be trafficked.

A whistleblower forced the debate into the open

Howell became so unnerved by his agency's failure to seize fentanyl that he began flagging overdose deaths that might have been caused by the very pills the DEA permitted to flow to dealers. One of those cases included a 15-month-old toddler who died after ingesting burned fentanyl residue last year in Española, a New Mexico town ravaged by grinding poverty and addiction.

Howell, who joined the DEA 19 years ago after a decade in the Navy, took his allegations to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel. The agency, tasked with protecting whistleblowers, initially found a "substantial likelihood of wrongdoing" and asked the Justice Department to investigate.

In early 2024, Howell told the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility that DEA agents had observed — yet not seized — separate deliveries of 150,000 and 50,000 fentanyl pills.

The DEA and federal prosecutors, he added, "are placing themselves in a precarious position where they will not be able to prove that the fentanyl they could have stopped did not result in the death of a person."

The Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility found in 2024 that the DEA and the U.S. attorney's office had made reasonable decisions in deciding to allow drugs to go unseized and that their inaction posed no "specific danger to public health."

The Office of Special Counsel, which critics say rarely pushes back on agency findings, deemed the Justice Department's report reasonable.

Howell, meanwhile, paid a price after coming forward. The DEA relegated him to desk duty for more than a year and docked his performance evaluations, according to Howell and DEA records. Internal records also show prosecutors barred him from testifying in federal court, citing his "pattern of refusing to heed" admonitions to allow drugs to go unseized during long-term investigations.

Pointing to the DEA's own "One Pill Can Kill" campaign, current and former agents said they could not understand the watchdog's finding that the tactics had not put the public in danger. They noted the drug is so dangerous it has to be handled in a specialized laboratory.

## **Qatar says gas export terminal blast killed 13 as workers tried to resume operations**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An explosion tore through Qatar's key natural gas export terminal Sunday night as workers tried to resume operations after Iran bombed it during the war, causing a fire that killed at least 13 people and hurt 66 others.

The blast at the Ras Laffan industrial area could cause further chaos in global energy markets, as Qatar remains one of the world's top natural gas producers. Qatar shut down its production after Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz meant it couldn't get shipments out to clients.

With Iran loosening its grip as negotiations continue over a permanent end to the war, Qatar began work to try to restart its export terminal. That sparked the explosion and fire at the Barzan gas supply facility, state-run QatarEnergy said.

"I would like to emphasize that this was an accident and not sabotage or hostile in nature," Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi told a news conference Monday afternoon in Doha, Qatar's capital.

The minister gave the toll and said the dead came from India and Pakistan. The nationalities of the 66 injured included people from Qatar and a variety of African and Asian nations, al-Kaabi said.

The scale of the damage remains unknown.

The Barzan plant had a capacity of almost 1.4 billion standard cubic feet of sales gas per day, which Qatar used primarily for local electricity generation and to power its crucial water desalination plants in the desert reaches of the Arabian Peninsula.

Qatar owns nearly all of the plant, with a small share also held by ExxonMobil. The oil company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In March, an Iranian missile hit Ras Laffan, sparking a fire that caused "extensive" damage before it was extinguished, authorities said. Qatar had already halted production there because of Iranian attacks.

Qatar shares its massive offshore natural gas field in the Persian Gulf with Iran. That natural gas production has made Qatar wealthy. It has used that money to raise its profile worldwide through hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, creating the Al Jazeera news network and funding its work as an international mediator, including the talks in Switzerland between Iran and the United States.

## **FACT FOCUS: Netanyahu's claims about Iran's nuclear program run counter to public evidence**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed that Iran would have developed a nuclear weapon and used it on Israel were it not for the two recent wars. There is no public evidence for that assessment, which runs counter to those of the U.N. nuclear watchdog and U.S. intelligence agencies.

For decades, Netanyahu has made dire predictions about Iran's disputed nuclear program, most famously at the United Nations with visual aids. The rhetoric has escalated since the U.S. and Iran reached an interim peace deal this month, and as Netanyahu faces elections later this year.

Iran has always insisted its nuclear program is peaceful, even as it has enriched uranium to near-weapons-grade levels far higher than those required for civilian use. The United States and others say Iran's nuclear program had a military component until 2003.

Even before the two wars set back its nuclear program, Iran was months or years away from developing a usable atomic weapon, and there's no evidence it had chosen to pursue one. Israel is widely believed to have its own nuclear weapons.

Here's a closer look.

### **THE CLAIMS**

"We have prevented Iran from carrying out a plan to annihilate us, and today they would have had a

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 73 of 74**

nuclear weapon, an atomic bomb to do so," Netanyahu said Sunday at the JNS International Policy Summit, in remarks delivered in English. "Had we not acted in Operation Rising Lion and then in Operation Roaring Lion, Iran would have had atomic bombs. And let me tell you something, they would have used them."

## THE FACTS

Iran and Israel have been archenemies since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iranian leaders long have called for Israel's destruction. Netanyahu, since the 1990s, has made challenging Iran's nuclear program his life's work, repeatedly warning that Tehran was on the cusp of building a bomb.

When U.S. President Donald Trump scrapped the 2015 nuclear deal — an agreement Netanyahu had campaigned against — the U.S. restored and expanded crippling sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under it. Iran responded by ramping up enrichment to 60%, a short, technical step from weapons-grade.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, has noted that Iran is the only state without nuclear weapons to enrich uranium at that level. Rafael Mariano Grossi, the IAEA's director-general, has said Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium would allow it to potentially build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it choose to do so.

But there is no public evidence of Iran having an active nuclear weapons program since 2003, when the IAEA, the U.S. and others say Tehran abandoned the effort as the U.S. invaded Iraq. IAEA inspections, though increasingly limited, have not reported any evidence of a weapons program.

To build a usable weapon, Iran would need to enrich uranium up to 90% purity. It would need to build the actual bomb, then likely miniaturize it and mount it on a ballistic missile. That process would take months or years, and would risk exposure by Israeli or U.S. intelligence.

In 2025, a report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which oversees all U.S. intelligence agencies, said: "We continue to assess Iran is not building a nuclear weapon."

Israel launched a 12-day war on Iran in June 2025, which it called Operation Rising Lion. During that conflict, the U.S. struck Iranian nuclear sites, destroying centrifuges and halting Iran's enrichment of uranium. That enrichment is not known to have resumed, and the bombing is believed to have buried its highly enriched uranium. Iran has blocked the IAEA from visiting the bombed sites.

Following last year's war, Netanyahu boasted that Israel had sent Iran's nuclear program "to oblivion." The U.S. and Israel then launched a surprise attack on Feb. 28, which Israel refers to as Operation Roaring Lion.

The opening strikes killed Iran's longtime supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had the final say over the nuclear program. Iranian diplomats say he issued a fatwa, or religious ruling, against nuclear weapons.

His son and successor, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, is believed to have been wounded in those strikes and has not been seen in public since becoming supreme leader. He is seen as a more hard-line figure than his father and has not offered any statements about Iran's nuclear intentions.

Other Iranian officials have suggested Iran should seek nuclear weapons if its existence is threatened.

## Today in History: June 23, Title IX signed into law

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, June 23, the 174th day of 2026. There are 191 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 23, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed into law the Education Amendments of 1972, including Title IX, which barred discrimination on the basis of sex for "any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Also on this date:

In 1888, abolitionist Frederick Douglass received one vote from the Kentucky delegation at the Republican convention in Chicago, making him the first Black candidate to have his name placed in nomination for U.S. president.

In 1931, aviators Wiley Post and Harold Gatty took off from Roosevelt Field in New York on an around-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, June 23, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 018 ~ 74 of 74**

the-world flight that lasted eight days and 15 hours.

In 1947, the Senate joined the House in overriding President Harry S. Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act, designed to limit the power of organized labor.

In 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser was elected president of Egypt.

In 1969, Warren E. Burger was sworn in as chief justice of the United States by his predecessor, Earl Warren.

In 1985, all 329 people on an Air India Boeing 747 were killed when it crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near Ireland after a bomb planted by Sikh separatists exploded onboard.

In 1992, mob boss John Gotti was sentenced to life after being found guilty of murder, racketeering and other charges. (Gotti would die in prison in 2002.)

In 2013, daredevil Nik Wallenda successfully completed a 22-minute walk without a safety net or harness on a tightrope spanning the Little Colorado River Gorge in Arizona, near the Grand Canyon. The quarter-mile (0.4 kilometer) crossing was seen by people worldwide via TV and online streaming.

In 2016, Britain voted to leave the European Union after a bitterly divisive referendum campaign, toppling Prime Minister David Cameron, who led the drive to remain in the bloc.

In 2018, 12 young soccer players and their coach became trapped in a flooded cave in northern Thailand. All were plucked to safety, emaciated but weary, after Thai navy SEALs began a rescue operation more than two weeks after the team became trapped.

In 2022, in a major expansion of gun rights, the Supreme Court said Americans have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense.

Today's Birthdays: Author Richard Bach is 90. Computer scientist Vint Cerf is 83. Actor Bryan Brown is 79. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is 78. Musician Glenn Danzig is 71. Actor Frances McDormand is 69. Golf Hall of Famer Colin Montgomerie is 63. Actor Selma Blair is 54. French soccer manager and former player Zinedine Zidane is 54. Actor Joel Edgerton is 52. Singer-songwriter Jason Mraz is 49. Rapper Memphis Bleek is 48. Actor Melissa Rauch ("The Big Bang Theory") is 46. Figure skater Alexandra Ignatova is 22. Model and actor Laneya Grace is 22.