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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)

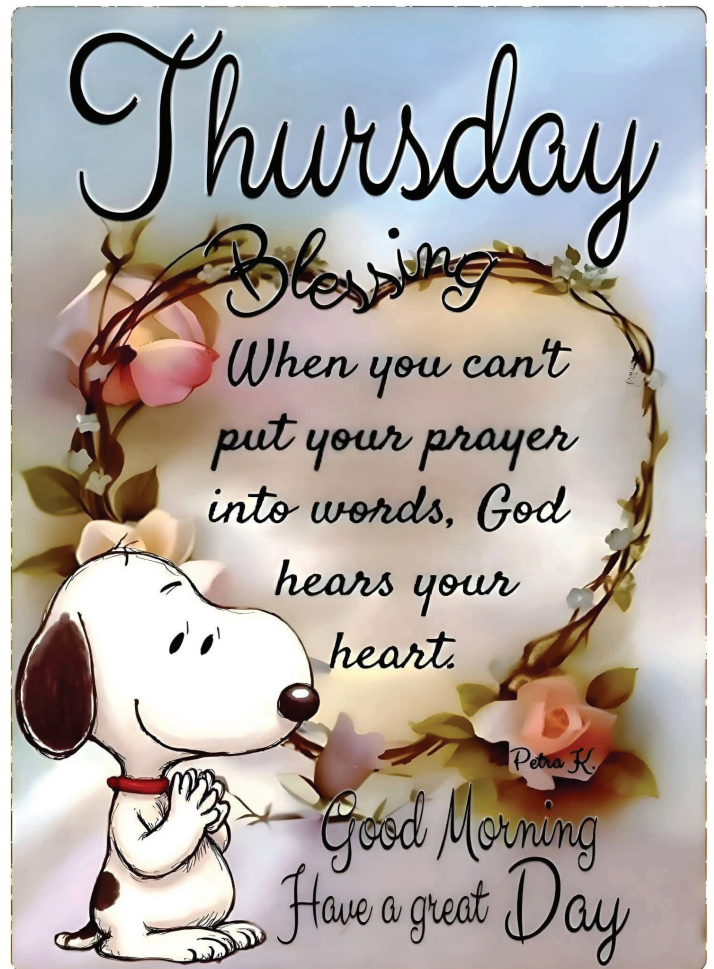
U8 Baseball at Columbia, DH, 5:30 p.m. (Red)

U18 Softball at Redfield, 6 p.m.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Friday, June 26

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken on bun, oven roasted potatoes, California blend, fruit.

U14 Legion at Vern Jark Tournament, Aberdeen

Sr. Legion at The ROCK Tournament, Madison

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

Saturday, June 27

U14 Legion at Vern Jark Tournament, Aberdeen

Sr. Legion at The ROCK Tournament, Madison

U8 Baseball - Groton Tournament (Red & Blue)

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1440

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

European Heat Wave

Urgent heat warnings are in effect across more than a dozen Western European countries as the region grapples with a severe and unusually early heat wave.

Europe is warming more than twice as fast as the global average, driven in part by shifting air circulation, less smog, and proximity to rapidly warming Arctic waters. Western Europe is currently trapped under an Omega block—a stubborn high-pressure system resembling the uppercase Greek letter Omega (Ω). The block, expected to persist through the weekend, has already pushed France to its highest-ever national average temperature Tuesday, with some regions exceeding 110 degrees Fahrenheit. At least 40 people have drowned seeking relief, and heat-related power grid failures have left more than 60,000 homes without electricity.

Unlike in the US, most buildings in Europe lack central air conditioning, forcing people to take unusual measures. Last year, a British researcher suggested coating windows in 10% fat Greek yogurt.

Camp Mystic Files for Bankruptcy

The owner of Texas' Camp Mystic filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection yesterday, estimating total debts at \$10M-\$50M. The proceedings come nearly one year after flooding killed 25 campers, two counselors, and the camp's co-owner and executive director.

The all-girls Christian summer camp had inadequate emergency evacuation plans, state investigators revealed in findings this month. Adults were unprepared to evacuate the campers in the early hours of July 4, 2025, when waters from the Guadalupe River rose over 27 feet in under two-and-a-half hours. Although at least 39 adults were present, only three rushed to get hundreds of girls to safety: the camp's owner, his son, and a security guard. The others were not given instructions, and there were no emergency plans in the event of a flood.

A state criminal investigation is ongoing. Although the camp sought to partially reopen this summer, it remained closed amid pressure from victims' families.

Vice City, USA

Preorders begin today for Grand Theft Auto VI, with the standard game priced at \$79.99 (\$99.99 for the premium edition, with added vehicles, weapons, and clothing). The video game will be released on Nov. 19.

Grand Theft Auto V, released in 2013, is the second-best-selling video game of all time, after Minecraft (which has sold 350 million units). Players engage in dangerous heists, with the latest installment following two protagonists in the US' fictional Vice City.

The gaming industry is bigger than the movie and recorded music industries combined. In 2022, gaming generated \$184.4B compared to \$26.2B for music and \$26B in box office revenue. While growth slowed in the years after the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry still broke \$200B in revenue last year; much of the growth in recent years comes from mobile and PC games.

Does violence in video games translate to real life? The American Psychological Association says the evidence is insufficient.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Supergirl" releases in theaters nationwide tomorrow, with some early screenings tonight; the \$170M DC Studios-Warner Bros. feature is projected to earn upward of \$40M this weekend.

Motion Picture Academy invites "Wuthering Heights" actor Jacob Elordi, "One Battle After Another" actress Teyana Taylor, Disney CEO Josh D'Amaro, and 526 others to become Oscar voters.

Switzerland stuns Jesse Marsch's Canada 2-1 in Vancouver, winning Group B.

USMNT battles Turkey at 10 pm ET in Los Angeles, after Germany meets Ecuador at 4 pm ET and Japan plays Sweden at 7 pm ET.

Science & Technology

OpenAI debuts Jalapeño, its first custom chip optimized to run its large language models.

Chinese supercomputer crowned world's fastest, taking top spot from the US.

Archaeologists are perplexed by a South African cave with only female skeletons from a 300,000-year-old ancestor of modern humans; some hypothesize it may have been a sex-specific burial site.

mRNA vaccine that delivers antibodies directly to the gut may provide immunity to norovirus, or the stomach flu; there are currently no drugs or vaccines for the highly contagious stomach bug.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq -0.4%).

Bitcoin falls below \$60K, hitting lowest level since October 2024.

Chemours agrees to \$450M settlement over alleged "forever chemicals" pollution in waterways; marks first federal settlement against a PFAS manufacturer.

Agility Robotics to go public through a \$2.5B SPAC merger, potentially becoming first publicly traded US company focused solely on humanoid robots.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump cancels plan to sign bill aiming to reduce housing costs by building homes, restricting investors' home purchases; says he won't sign until Congress passes the SAVE America Act.

France logs its first Ebola case—a doctor who had traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo; no indication of local spread as of this writing.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D, NY-8) weighs in on New York House primary races this week, in which democratic socialists backed by NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D) defeated House incumbents.



A promotional poster for a live music event. It features a photograph of a smiling woman with long blonde hair wearing sunglasses. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with a guitar neck and the text "LIVE MUSIC AT THE LEGION!". The artist's 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 indicates the time "9 P.M. TO 1 A.M." and the venue "GROTON AMERICAN LEGION". At the bottom, a banner reads "GREAT MUSIC ★ COLD DRINKS ★ GOOD TIMES" and "EVERYONE WELCOME!" with decorative arrows.

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 Junior and Senior Legion teams sweep home games against Clark Area/CWL

The Groton Post 39 Junior and Senior Legion baseball teams both came away with victories Wednesday night in Groton, highlighted by a dramatic walk-off win from the junior squad and a late offensive surge by the seniors.

The Junior Legion team rallied for a 4-3 victory over Clark Area Jr. Legion in a game that wasn't decided until the final inning. After five scoreless innings from Groton starter Alex Abeln, Clark Area broke through with three runs in the top of the sixth. Charlie Luvaas, Isaac Johnson and Konrad Frankfurth each drove in a run to give Clark Area a 3-1 advantage.

Groton responded and entered the bottom of the seventh trailing by two runs before taking advantage of a pair of Clark Area errors. With the game tied at 3-3, the winning run crossed the plate on another Clark Area miscue, giving Post 39 the walk-off victory.

Abeln was outstanding on the mound, earning the win after allowing just one hit over five shutout innings while striking out nine and walking two. Wesley Borg recorded the save.

At the plate, T.C. Schuster paced Groton with three hits, while Lincoln Shilhanek drove in two runs. Defensively, Groton played error-free baseball, with Kason Oswald handling a team-high 12 chances in the field.

The Senior Legion team followed with an 8-4 victory over C/WL Legion.

C/WL struck first in the opening inning when Jakob Steen delivered an RBI single, helping the visitors build an early lead. Groton trailed entering the fifth inning before erupting for six runs in the bottom half of the frame to seize control of the game.

The big inning featured four hits and several free passes, with Tristin McGannon delivering the key blow, a full-count single that plated two runs and helped Post 39 turn a deficit into a 7-4 lead.

Karsten Fliehs went the distance on the mound to earn the victory, allowing four runs, three earned, on seven hits while striking out two and walking one over seven innings.

Alex Abeln continued his strong night offensively, going 2-for-4 with two RBIs, while both Abeln and Fliehs collected two hits. Jordan Schwan added two walks as Groton showed patience at the plate, drawing seven walks in the contest.

For C/WL, Caleb Drenth led the offense with two hits, while Steen, Damian Severson and Drenth each drove in a run.

The two victories capped a successful evening for Groton baseball, with the Junior Legion squad earning a thrilling walk-off win and the Senior Legion team using a decisive six-run fifth inning to secure the sweep.

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Clark Area Jr. Legion 3 - 4 Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion

📍 Home 📅 Wednesday June 24, 2026

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
CLRK	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	5	5
GRTN	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	7	0

BATTING

Clark Area Jr. Le...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Gaiko... #00 (SS)	3	0	1	0	1	0
B Pommer #99 (2B)	3	1	1	0	1	1
C Drenth #16 (P)	3	0	1	0	1	1
C Luvaas #20 (3B)	3	1	0	0	1	0
M Olson #15 (CF)	3	1	1	0	0	1
L Foster #12 (C)	3	0	0	0	0	3
I Johnson #5 (RF)	3	0	1	1	0	2
K Frankf... #44 (LF)	2	0	0	0	1	1
C Kelly #33 (1B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Totals	25	3	5	1	5	11

TB: C Drenth, C Gaikowski, I Johnson, M Olson, B Pommer, **HBP:** C Kelly, **SB:** C Gaikowski, **LOB:** 7

PITCHING

Clark Area...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Drenth #16	6.2	7	4	2	2	6	0
Totals	6.2	7	4	2	2	6	0

L: C Drenth, **P-S:** C Drenth 107-72, **HBP:** C Drenth, **BF:** C Drenth 34, **E:** K Frankfurth, C Gaikowski, C Luvaas, C Kelly 2

Groton Post 39...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (P)	3	2	1	0	1	0
B Fliehs #19 (1B)	3	1	1	0	1	0
T Schuster #3 (3B)	4	0	3	0	0	0
Z Fliehs #23 (RF)	4	0	0	0	0	1
L Shilhanek #17	3	0	1	2	0	0
R Schelle #6 (2B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
J Bisbee #15 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
W Borg #1 (SS)	3	0	0	0	0	0
K Oswald #12 (C)	3	0	0	0	0	2
X Ellenbe... #8 (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
N Scepta... #7 (CF)	2	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	31	4	7	2	2	6

2B: T Schuster, **TB:** T Schuster 4, B Fliehs, R Schelle, L Shilhanek, A Abeln, **HBP:** J Bisbee, **LOB:** 6

Groton Pos...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Abeln #5	5.0	1	0	0	2	9	0
W Borg #1	2.0	4	3	3	3	2	0
Totals	7.0	5	3	3	5	11	0

W: A Abeln, **P-S:** W Borg 52-29, A Abeln 73-44, **WP:** W Borg 2, **HBP:** A Abeln, **BF:** W Borg 12, A Abeln 19

Land for Sale

**800 Acres Spink
& northern
Clark County
646 tillable acres,
133 pasture**

**For more info, visit:
www.keminklandco.com**



**Rod Kemink, Broker
605-880-2112
Watertown, SD**

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Korbin Kucker and Teylor Diegel were helping with the patching of the city streets this week. The patching process is expected to be completed today.



Work continues on the 10-unit garage in downtown Groton. Left photo was taken Tuesday and the right photo with the rebar laid in taken at the end of day on Wednesday.



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.*





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Great Plains tribes focus on a different anniversary as US celebrates its 250th

150th commemoration of Native American victory at the Battle of Little Bighorn, aka Battle of Greasy Grass, comes a week before Fourth of July

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Trina Lone Hill is not excited about the July 3 fireworks display at Mount Rushmore to commemorate the nation's 250th birthday.

"I actually find it offensive," said Lone Hill, an Oglala Sioux Tribal Council member and former tribal historic preservation officer from Batesland, on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

State and federal officials "don't care if we're resisting, they don't care if we have opinions," she said. The Black Hills, where Mount Rushmore is located, is "our sacred place," she added.

The Lakota creation story is tied to Wind Cave in the Black Hills, and multiple sites in the Black Hills correspond with celestial features in Lakota spirituality. Lakota people controlled the Black Hills and all of western South Dakota pursuant to an 1868 treaty that the U.S. government later broke.

The fireworks display at the mountain carving is one of more than 1,000 events planned across the United States to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the country's independence.

Instead of observing the nation's birthday during the Fourth of July weekend, Lone Hill's focus is on an event this week: the 150th commemoration of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Known to Lakota people as the Battle of the Greasy Grass, the conflict was a major victory for tribes during the United States' encroachment on their land after the discovery of gold in the Black Hills. Northern Cheyenne, Arapaho, Dakota and Lakota warriors and leaders wiped out the Army's 7th Cavalry, including the famed commander George Armstrong Custer, on June 25 and 26, 1876, in what later became the state of Montana.

This year, there's a cooperative effort by the National Park Service and tribes in multiple states to mark the 150th anniversary at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The three-day event Thursday through Saturday is expected to attract up to 10,000 attendees. The schedule includes speakers from South Dakota-based tribes, including Lone Hill and Ryman LeBeau, the chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

"The 150th for us is a priority, just bringing that pride back to our people," Lone Hill said. "This is something I said we have to keep going for our families. We can't lose that history."

'Complex relationship' with tribes affects America 250 efforts

The state's America 250 commission — a group of Cabinet members, the state historian and other appointees formed by an executive order by then-Gov. Kristi Noem — includes Department of Tribal Relations Secretary Algin Young, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. He has been working to connect with tribal leaders about the group's efforts to commemorate the country's 250th anniversary.

"As we commemorate America's history, it's essential to recognize how deeply it is connected to the heritage of South Dakota's nine tribal nations," Young said.

Young hasn't heard back from many of the tribal leaders, he said. He wants to know if tribes are planning gatherings or commemorations of their own, and how the commission can support those efforts.

But, "it's a complex relationship," Young said about the dynamic between the tribes and the state.

Former Gov. Kristi Noem, who left her post in 2025 to serve as head of the national Department of

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Homeland Security, was at one point banned from all nine of South Dakota's tribal nations after alleging, without providing evidence, that tribal leaders were "personally benefiting" from drug cartel activity on reservations and after saying Native American children "don't have any hope."

Young said Noem's successor, Gov. Larry Rhoden, is working on repairing relationships between the state and tribal nations.

"It's a reset," Young said. "I'm very hopeful that those relationships are rebuilt and we move forward together."

Boyd Gourneau, chairman of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, acknowledged that he doesn't have a strong relationship with state leaders. He praised the late Gov. George Mickelson's efforts to build strong communication and trust during his 1990 Year of Reconciliation.

"We really haven't went forward since then," Gourneau said. "I'm not saying we're perfect, that that door swings both ways. We need to improve as well. I understand that, but I think we could all be better, and we all should work towards that."

Gourneau hasn't been involved in America 250 planning. But he plans to use the Fourth of July to recognize the military service of people around him, like his son.

"I don't know if it's a celebration, but I'm going to honor them. I am touched by their sacrifice. So, I'm not going to say I don't care," he said of America 250 events, "but it's secondary to what we're doing at Little Bighorn."

Differing views of the declaration

Ben Jones, state historian and chair of the state's America 250 Commission, shares Young's goal of an inclusive celebration of the anniversary. But Jones said unreturned phone calls, emails and invitations showed that tribal leaders in the state weren't interested.

"That was disappointing," he said. "The Declaration of Independence is for all."

There are many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Declaration of Independence, Jones said, "and that misunderstanding isn't improved when today you choose not to participate, and to have some informed discussions about why that language exists."

Lone Hill has a different view.

"For me personally, the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence is like a slap in the face," Lone Hill said. "In that Declaration of Independence they call us 'merciless Indian savages.'"

Lone Hill was referencing the declaration's list of the British king's alleged "injuries and usurpations."

"He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us," that part of the declaration says, "and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages."

The relationship between tribal nations and the United States since the declaration has been "like a rollercoaster," according to Craig Howe, founder of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The signing of the Declaration of Independence might not have had immediate effects on tribes in North America's interior, Howe said, but as the country expanded, so did policies that forcibly removed Indigenous people from their homelands.

While this year's anniversary is an opportunity to talk about that, Howe wants more consistent education about Native American history.

It "should be embedded in the formal educational system in our country," he said. "We shouldn't need some 250 years before we talk about it again. It should just be."

Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

South Dakota utility regulators approve Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern merger

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota utility regulators unanimously approved the merger of Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy on Wednesday in Pierre.

The new utility will be named Bright Horizon Energy, with an estimated total value of \$15.4 billion and 2.1 million customers in eight states.

Public Utilities Commission Chairman Chris Nelson said state law makes the approval of mergers the default unless there's a serious problem discovered.

"It says you shall approve these kinds of mergers, unless there's a likelihood of significant adverse impacts to customers in this state," Nelson said. "And I would submit that's probably a fairly low bar. But that's the bar that the Legislature has established. It's not something we establish."

Along with the merger, regulators approved two negotiated settlements addressing customer protections and labor concerns.

One settlement bars charging South Dakota customers for costs stemming from executive "golden parachutes" and other merger-related costs. It also delays rate increases and ensures the combined company keeps its headquarters in Rapid City for at least 10 years, and maintains a corporate office in or near Sioux Falls for at least five years.

The other settlement gives union and South Dakota-based contractors added consideration for projects.

Frank Kloucek is the Democratic nominee for the Public Utilities Commission seat being vacated by Commissioner Gary Hanson, who is not seeking reelection. Kloucek criticized the merger during the public comment portion of Wednesday's meeting, which happened after the vote.

Kloucek said the merger creates a "super monopoly," and he criticized the commission for not providing more time for public input and scrutiny.

The companies announced the proposed merger in August. They said it would diversify the combined entity's energy sources, help meet rising energy demands from data centers, and benefit investors.

NorthWestern Energy serves about 65,600 South Dakota electric customers and 51,200 South Dakota natural-gas customers. Black Hills Energy serves 78,976 South Dakota electric customers.

Among the states affected by the merger, Montana is the only one in which regulators have not yet approved it.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

COMMENTARY

Book excerpt: Evolving commemorations of the Battle of the Little Bighorn

by Sandy Barnard

The following excerpt is reprinted with permission from the new book "Celebrating Custer's Last Stand: 150 Years Commemorating the Battle of the Little Big Horn," by Sandy Barnard and published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press ahead of the 150th anniversary events June 25-27 at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. This excerpt is from a chapter on the battle's 50th commemoration, a three-day event that began on June 24, 1926.

That night, various participants gathered in the Crow Agency park for a "talk fest." Among those present were William Hart and Mary Roberts Rinehart. As the Hardin newspaper reported, "There were gray-headed and world-marked characters of the west telling story after story of the past." Little Moon, a veteran of

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1876, reached out to Colonel Lee "to show that ancient grudges have vanished."

All night, the Hardin newspaper reported, "carloads of people coursed the highways to Crow Agency." By Friday morning, the town's main street was reminiscent of a thriving gold camp as thousands of people roamed about the area. "The name of Custer was bringing them in by the thousands," the paper declared.

Again, the Associated Press stepped up with additional facts. Traffic the night before "was probably the most acute Montana has ever known. From midnight Thursday until nearly noon, Friday, a procession of cars, moving at times in almost solid formation followed the highway. From a point about three miles north of Crow Agency to the battlefield, three miles south, the procession moved at a snail's pace during the morning hours." No serious incidents occurred along the dirt road (paving was in process, with twelve miles between Hardin and Crow Agency done, and would be completed by the next fall), thanks to the attentive police officers watching over the traffic.

The big attraction on 25 June was the Seventh Cavalry's return to the Custer battlefield. The crowd began gathering early on. Guards had been posted to control the crowd, but they proved incapable of stopping large numbers of people from driving their automobiles high onto the hill near the monument. Led by Colonel Lee, the mounted troopers advanced from the south along the historic Battle Ridge. "In five troops they came — the same troops that Custer led, but a new generation of men, dropping over the brow of the hill under guidons to which were attached streamers bearing the names of Custer's commanders." Accompanying them were General Godfrey and the seven surviving ex-troopers.

They marched toward the monument while the Seventh Cavalry Band, mounted on white steeds and playing a funeral dirge, moved slowly in respect for the fallen troopers. To the left came a far-flung column of hundreds of Indians in war regalia of brilliant colors. In the van were the nearly eighty Sioux and Cheyenne veterans of the fighting. At their front was White Bull, who at age twenty had led a band of Lakota warriors alongside Rain-in-the-Face.

Near the monument, the two approaching groups met. General Godfrey faced White Bull, who held out his hand, making the sign of peace. The general, in a symbolic reply, dropped his unsheathed sword into its scabbard as he rode forward. The two former enemies clasped hands and then exchanged gifts. White Bull gave the general a prized possession of a white Hudson's Bay blanket; Godfrey gave him a large, mounted American flag. At that point, as the two columns parted, the band broke out "Garryowen."

McChristian notes that "outwardly symbolic of the peace theme, these climactic gestures demonstrated an underlying agenda — that the once hostile Indians had accepted government domination to the ultimate benefit."

Godfrey dismounted and led the seven ex-troopers to the monument, where they laid wreaths on the mass grave in memory of their comrades. An honor squad from Troop F fired three volleys over the markers on the hillside, denoting where Custer's men had fallen in the battle. "Following the crash of the volleys everyone bowed his head in silence as 'Taps' sounded and re-echoed among the historic ravines and hills," the Trumpeter reported. "The moment was tense for everyone felt the significance of that 'farewell,' that soldiers' requiem." To conclude the events on the hillside, the modern troopers paired up with their warrior counterparts, the former on the left and the latter on the right, and rode down from the battle ridge together in a powerful symbolic gesture.

In New York City, Libbie Custer listened to the ceremonies on the radio at a local hotel. According to McChristian, "Libbie remained contemplative and consumed in her memories for the rest of the evening." Her friend, the author Marguerite Merington, sat with her as she listened to the broadcast, and recalled that it appeared she "had been transported into another world."

Sandy Barnard has written numerous publications on the history of the Civil War and Plains Indian Wars. He has especially focused on the life and legacy of George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh United States Cavalry in his writings. He has also worked as the editor of Greasy Grass, the annual magazine of the Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association, and on projects for the National Park Service at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

Trump wants \$87.6 billion to pay for his war in Iran, aid to farmers and more

Proposal also includes approval of year-round E15 gasoline

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration sent Congress a request Wednesday for \$87.6 billion in emergency funding to cover the cost of the war in Iran and other expenses.

White House budget director Russ Vought wrote in a letter that in addition to addressing “urgent needs” for the Defense Department, the funding would help the U.S. government assist with the Ebola outbreak and provide aid to American farmers.

Funding for the Energy Department, he wrote, would “support nuclear and other energy security requirements, primarily for the National Nuclear Security Administration.”

The supplemental spending request asks Congress to provide money for “restoration and construction projects in and around Washington, D.C.,” as well as the project that would modernize Penn Station in New York City.

The proposal asks lawmakers to add a few policy changes, including the year-round sale of E-15 gasoline, to any supplemental spending bill they may approve in the weeks and months ahead. Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, praised the move on social media. “Pres Trump’s admin is exactly right 2say yr-round nationwide E15 is ‘urgent’ & ‘needed’ Congress MUST pass yr-round nationwide E15 by end of fiscal yr Im very glad 2 see it incl in Defense Dept’s supplemental request,” said Grassley.

The proposals didn’t appear to have broad consensus among Democrats, who would likely be needed for any emergency funding to become law.

Senate Appropriations Committee ranking member Patty Murray, D-Wash., wrote in a statement the administration’s request “is not merely meant to pay for the president’s disastrous war, but an attempt to secure tens of billions of additional dollars for unrelated Pentagon priorities that should rightly be considered through the annual appropriations process.”

“I will closely review this request in its entirety and ensure we take care of our servicemembers, but I will not rubberstamp tens of billions more for this disastrous war of choice,” Murray added.

Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Susan Collins, R-Maine, wrote in a statement she will “evaluate the Administration’s supplemental budget request.”

“I plan to convene an Appropriations Committee hearing so that Senators can hear directly from the relevant Administration officials,” she said.

The supplemental spending requests ask lawmakers to provide:

- \$67.15 billion for the Defense Department
- \$11.1 billion for the Agriculture Department to provide aid to farmers
- \$3.36 billion for the State Department for diplomatic, security and global health programs
- \$2.03 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard
- \$1 billion for the Transportation Department to “to assist in the final design and construction of a modernized Penn Station in New York City”
- \$1 billion for the Labor Department to “increase the benefit levels for participants of certain pension plans that were sponsored by Delphi Corporation and terminated as a result of General Motors’ bankruptcy in 2009”
- \$767.5 million for the Energy Department
- \$600 million for the General Services Administration’s federal buildings fund
- \$500 million for the National Park Service to upgrade a seawall and improve the World War II Memorial
- \$40.26 million for the FBI for its role in the Iran war and “other classified needs”
- \$36.18 million for the Treasury Department’s office of terrorism and financial intelligence
- \$13.1 million for the Homeland Security Department’s operations and support account that was part of a “classified request.”

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

Lunch with 'mad as a murder hornet' Trump and US Senate GOP fails to heal divisions

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans walked into a lunch with the president on Wednesday looking for ways to unify, but they left the closed-door meeting on Capitol Hill as fractured as ever about policy goals.

President Donald Trump said after the huddle that he was "very proud of the party" but didn't offer any concrete steps forward amid deep divisions on a nationwide voter identification law or other issues that don't yet have enough GOP support to reach his desk.

"For the most part we have a really well-unified party," Trump said. "And I said it very strongly, we have the hottest country anywhere in the world."

Republican senators said during hallway interviews after the meeting ended that it wasn't entirely productive and didn't create much, if any, goodwill.

Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy somewhat jokingly said the meeting went "swimmingly" before detailing a confrontation he had with Trump over the lack of information on the Iran war. Senators have repeatedly asked for a classified briefing from administration officials, but haven't yet received one.

Cassidy, who lost his May primary after Trump endorsed an opponent, said the exchange began when Trump asked why four Republican senators voted with Democrats to approve a War Powers Resolution earlier this week. Along with Cassidy, they were Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Susan Collins of Maine.

"I said, 'Well, we've not been briefed on how it's going, that the stated objectives don't appear to be achieved, and it appears as if ... it's not going as well as we're being told,'" Cassidy recalled. "At which point I think the president said something negative about me. I perceived it as attempting to bully me from asking a question that I think the American people need to know.

"And I'm not going to be bullied when I feel like I'm asking a question the American people need to know. And so at that point it began to escalate. And at some point it de-escalated."

Trump declined to directly answer a question before the meeting began about whether he believes the voter identification law he advocates, which doesn't have the votes necessary to advance in the Senate, is more important than a broadly bipartisan housing bill. The housing package would have given Republicans a legislative victory on the campaign trail roughly four months before the midterm elections.

The president was scheduled to sign that housing measure just before he met with Senate Republicans, but he canceled to press for the election bill, called the SAVE America Act.

The bill would overhaul how Americans register to vote and cast ballots in federal elections, such as requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote and requiring a government-issued photo identification at polling locations.

"Every election is important. We're doing very well," Trump said.

"They want a lot of communists to come in," he said, referring to Democrats. "I'm saying it a little bit differently but the people that they're pushing are communists. And this country is not going to have communists."

Trump 'mad as a murder hornet' about Iran vote

Florida Sen. Rick Scott said he hoped the meeting would help Republicans build consensus, though he acknowledged it led to tension.

"You've been around the president, he was pretty forceful about what he cares about," Scott said, later adding his goal in organizing the meeting was "to try to bring people together."

Scott said Senate Republicans didn't talk with Trump about using the complex budget reconciliation process to establish grants for states that implement certain voter identification requirements. House Speaker Mike Johnson put the idea forward earlier in the day as one way to promote elements of the SAVE America Act.

Louisiana Sen. John Kennedy said he appreciated the president's "candor" during the meeting before

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saying Trump was “mad as a murder hornet about the war powers vote.”

“And I don’t blame him,” Kennedy said. “Put yourself in his shoes, he’s right in the middle of delicate negotiations and the Senate votes to get out of Iran. And it upset him.”

Kennedy said the president also pressed for the SAVE America Act, though he somewhat dismissed Johnson’s proposal to provide grants to states instead of enacting the entire bill.

“I don’t think that’s going to satisfy the president,” Kennedy said.

‘Like a hospital board meeting,’ with yelling

West Virginia Sen. Jim Justice said both Trump and Cassidy “expressed their feelings and didn’t hold back, but at the same time, it ended up respectful.”

“It was, I wouldn’t say super combative, but very passionate — very passionate,” he said.

Justice noted that “very, very few questions” were asked at the lunch.

Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall described Trump and Cassidy’s exchange as “very much like a hospital board meeting when a bunch of doctors are yelling at each other. But at the end of the day, we’ll figure out a way to get along.”

Trump, he said, was “very disappointed” by the four GOP senators voting this week to try to limit any additional military action against Iran.

“They’re trying to negotiate that and they feel like that vote from Republicans chopped their legs out from under them,” Marshall said. “And they’re making such incredible progress on this deal. So it’s hard for them to negotiate it when there’s two messages coming out of Washington.”

Pressed on the confrontation between Cassidy and Trump, Sen. Tommy Tuberville said the two “just had some differences of opinion about Iran.”

The Alabama Republican said “it was very cordial — it wasn’t over the top.”

Not many questions

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis acknowledged there was some contention in the meeting over the voter identification bill.

“I know there’s frustration over the SAVE America Act passage, but we simply don’t have the votes because we’re not gonna nuke the filibuster, so it’s more a matter of how do we move forward,” he said. “Not all of the meeting was contentious, but there’s a general consensus that we on Capitol Hill have to start getting in lockstep.”

When it comes to the bipartisan housing bill, Tillis said it being signed into law is “up to the president, we’ve done our work.”

South Dakota’s Mike Rounds declined to give details about the meeting but said that Republicans “had a good talking to,” and that senators did not ask the president many questions.

Rounds said while Trump pushed for the SAVE America Act, there was little acknowledgment that the Senate lacks the votes to pass the bill.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn said there “wasn’t really a lot of opportunity” to ask questions during the meeting. He said Trump spoke for one hour and 15 minutes.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley said the president repeated some of the comments he posted on social media earlier in the day when he said he would refuse to sign the housing affordability package until Congress approves the election bill.

“He’s here to talk about whatever it is he wants to talk about,” Hawley said. “And without speaking for him, I think it’s safe to say that what he posted this morning is what he talked about.”

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

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

Trump spikes housing bill at last minute, refusing to sign until **SAVE America Act passes**

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND JENNIFER SHUTT

President Donald Trump derailed a housing overhaul that he was set to sign into law Wednesday, canceling a signing ceremony for the broadly popular bipartisan bill until Congress passes an election security measure.

Trump had been scheduled to sign the bill, which passed the Senate Monday and House Tuesday with wide margins, during a Capitol ceremony.

But in a pair of social media posts prior to the event, he derided the overhaul aimed at lowering housing costs as "minor" before refusing to sign it entirely.

"Today's Housing News Conference and Signing is hereby cancelled until such time as we pass the desperately needed SAVE AMERICA ACT, which I consider to be a National Emergency," Trump wrote on his social media platform, Truth Social.

The controversial SAVE America Act, a top priority for Trump, addresses the extremely rare phenomenon of noncitizen voting. Republican senators have told Trump there are not enough votes in the chamber for it to pass.

The housing bill's Senate sponsors, Banking Committee Chairman Tim Scott and ranking Democrat Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, sought to lower the costs of housing construction by removing regulatory barriers, expanding the uses of federal housing grants and banning institutional investors from buying single-family homes.

Scott, a South Carolina Republican, lauded the bill Tuesday as not only bipartisan, but nonpartisan, addressing universal needs.

Republican leaders framed the measure as addressing affordability, which is expected to be a key issue in November's midterm elections amid stubborn inflation.

The measure, which combined elements of proposals in each chamber, appeared on a fast track to becoming law after the Senate approved it 85-5 Monday and the House voted 358-32 Tuesday. The White House had said Trump supported the bill.

The House opponents were virtually all from a group of conservatives, led by Florida's Anna Paulina Luna, who said she would oppose all legislation from the Senate, and even some House rules resolutions, until the Senate passed Trump's elections security measure.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said during a Wednesday morning press conference that he spoke with the president earlier in the day and that he is going to delay signing the housing bill until Congress approves a grant program for elections through the complex budget reconciliation process. That's the same procedure the GOP used to enact its "big, beautiful" law and \$70 billion for immigration enforcement.

"You have to put it on a reconciliation bill," he said. "We believe that if you create a grant program that ties it to reconciling the budget and you allow blue states, if they come to their senses and they want to avail themselves of election integrity proposals and ideas and policies, they can draw down from a federal fund and use those funds. We're willing to invest heavily in that."

Johnson said he told Trump that Republicans in Congress can enact that policy if they "stand together." "As you know he has a window of time before he has to sign a bill and he's going to use a bit more of that window of time," Johnson said. "And we're going to go through this together."

Johnson said he expects Trump to sign the housing bill within the 10-day window.

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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

Get ready for the semiquincentennial: Americans celebrate a 250th anniversary

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Parties, protests, displays of historic documents, odes to the Founding Fathers — and a massive political rally by the president — will mark a deeply polarized nation's 250th anniversary on this Fourth of July.

Pomp and circumstance will abound for the semiquincentennial as the similarly named America250 and Freedom 250 offer different slates of programming on Independence Day and beyond.

A countdown and ball drop will ring in the holiday in the eight time zones across the United States and its territories. The milestone birthday bash will close with an "unprecedented pyrotechnic spectacle" in the skies above the National Mall, livestreamed.

In Philadelphia, a time capsule, to be opened in 2276, will be buried beneath Independence National Historic Park. The capsule contains contributions from each state and territory; sports memorabilia, including an Olympic gold medal; a 1GB digital archive from the Library of Congress; and a pocket Constitution signed by each Supreme Court justice, among hundreds of other items.

Visitors to the nation's capital can watch and anyone across the country, and the world, can tune in to a live dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence at 10 a.m. Eastern at the National Archives.

The public will also be invited to seldom-accessible spaces. The Federal Circuit Center for Innovation & Law will open its doors July 3. Guests, who must register ahead, will get the rare opportunity to don a judge's robe and take part in a mock trial inside the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit's courtrooms.

Federal judges will be on hand to answer questions, and Chief Judge Kimberly A. Moore hopes the experience will "show how courts, public service, discovery and history continue to shape the American story," she told States Newsroom in a statement.

The court complex, which is connected to the residence of first lady Dolley Madison, the wife of President James Madison, will also showcase various highlights of American history. Visitors can see Dolley's parlor, but also learn that NASA was headquartered there from 1958 to 1961. Space suits and a 3.9-billion-year-old moon rock will be on display.

America250 vs. Freedom 250

Two separate celebrations of America's big year are similarly named but feature vastly differing programs that stretch beyond Independence Day.

America250, a 24-member bipartisan commission created by Congress a decade ago, has spearheaded nationwide initiatives for school students, corporate employees and young entrepreneurs.

The commission has organized plenty of July Fourth happenings, including the ball drops, time capsule burial and simultaneous block parties in Charleston, South Carolina; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; and Milwaukee.

America250 will also host a benefit concert at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, which will feature Chris Stapleton and the Smashing Pumpkins. Tickets are \$17.76, and all proceeds go to nonprofit organizations to kick-off "Giving 4th," a nationwide initiative to promote mid-year donations.

It is all separate from President Donald Trump's plans for 2026. Days after beginning his second term, Trump issued an executive order creating Task Force 250, resulting in White House-led programming known as Freedom 250.

America250 Chair Rosie Rios said the parallel initiatives are a collaboration to balance events in the nation's capital and beyond.

"You see a lot of activities that the administration is planning in D.C. It was our agreement that we would focus on 'sea to shining sea,' and still obviously have opportunities for all Americans to participate across the board," said Rios, who served as U.S. treasurer under the Obama administration.

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State fair, car races, Trump rally

The White House initiative will take over the National Mall.

The president will kick off the Great American State Fair with a speech on Wednesday night. The fair, featuring 150 exhibits from all states and territories, a Ferris wheel and a model of Trump's controversial proposed "triumphal arch," will last until July 10.

Winners of the Freedom 250 "American Heroes" student art contest will also be honored at the fair.

As part of the Freedom 250 lineup, Trump will visit North Dakota on July 1 ahead of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library opening set for July 3.

A Freedom 250 firework display at Mount Rushmore in South Dakota is also scheduled for the eve of Independence Day.

Trump promised the "most spectacular TRUMP RALLY of them all" on July Fourth, featuring military bands and orchestras, military flyovers and keynote remarks from the president himself.

The night will culminate with the "LARGEST FIREWORKS SHOW IN HISTORY," he wrote on his Truth Social platform on June 15.

Attendees can also expect to see an increased National Guard presence as part of the administration's "summer surge."

Trump's Freedom 250 festivities will extend into August with a national high school athletic competition for 14-to-17 year olds, dubbed "The Patriot Games." The games are scheduled in Washington, D.C., for Aug. 9-11 and will stream on the ESPN app.

A one-hour primetime finale special will air on ABC the evening of Aug. 13. One female and one male athlete each will win a \$250,000 scholarship.

On Aug. 22-23, motorsports will come to the capital for the Freedom 250 Grand Prix where an NTT INDYCAR SERIES race will follow a 1.7 mile circuit "through the National Mall and surrounding city streets," according to the event's website. The event will be broadcast live on FOX.

'After the fireworks'

Rios said America250 also has an "after-the-fireworks strategy."

Winners of essay, art and poetry contests at schools across the U.S. can choose an all-expenses-paid "America's Field Trip" to one of several locations.

They include a private guided tour of the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida; Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota; or Yellowstone National Park in Montana and Wyoming, among other choices.

A national contest and expo for young entrepreneurs in San Francisco — and another in Washington, D.C., this coming November — awarded \$25,000 in seed grants under the "America Innovates" and startup initiative.

The commission is also aiming to make 2026 the "largest year of volunteer hours ever recorded by our country," Rios said. A counter on the commission's website displays the number of "America Gives" hours tracked, and Rios will announce a grand total on New Year's Eve in Times Square.

"We've had great stakeholders who've already made their pledges, so Coca-Cola, for example, made a pledge for 250,000 volunteer hours. Not to be outdone, Rob Manfred from Major League Baseball says, 'Well, we're going to do 250,000 volunteer hours,'" Rios said, referring to the baseball commissioner.

'Declaration of Interdependence'

Not all are feeling celebratory.

A coalition of organizers led by those who spearheaded the 2017 Women's March will host a nationwide mobilization event June 27 demanding change for America's next 250 years.

"We know the oxygen is going to be consumed by the official Trump-led commemoration on the Fourth. Kicking this off, in a proactive way, if we can talk about what we want this country to look like and what it actually does look like ahead of that, it's important that we go first," said Angelo Greco, a D.C.-based

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strategist handling messaging for the event.

Progressive groups including the 50501 movement, All of U.S. 250, Next 250 and Get Free are expecting up to 5,000 people at a flagship march near the White House and thousands more at teach-ins, faith events, art installations, marches and cultural events at 80 locations throughout the U.S.

Organizers are collecting signatures on a "Declaration of Interdependence" outlining four principles for a nation where: "All people are treated with dignity and respect; Everybody feels safe in every community; Access to clean, green spaces is abundant; and Every person who works earns a living wages and benefits that allow families a work-life balance."

"We're taking away the spotlight from those in power that want to whitewash our history, and instead setting the terms of the debate about what the story of America has been, who we are, and who we should become," said Anthony Vidal Torres, communications director at Get Free.

Activists said they are ready to incorporate any relevant news events into their messaging, not least of which could include a forthcoming Supreme Court decision on birthright citizenship.

The future of a polarized nation

Thought leaders, lawmakers and former administration officials from both parties are marking the nation's semiquincentennial by sounding the alarm about the effects of polarization.

Citing recent statistics, including that only 4 in 10 Gen Zers are more likely to describe the Founding Fathers as "villains" rather than "heroes," an advisory board convened by the center-left Progressive Policy Institute launched the American Identity Project meant to guide policymakers and educators on the future of civics education.

Rep. Ritchie Torres, D-N.Y., an adviser on the project, said he worries the liberal patriotism modeled by figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and former President Barack Obama is "vanishingly rare."

"The central emotion of our time is not patriotic hope about America, but rage against America across the political spectrum," Torres said at the think tank's June 11 event to unveil the board's Identity Project "manifesto."

Linda Chavez, a former Reagan administration official and chair of the conservative Center for Equal Opportunity, said she sees the problem on "both the left and right."

"I see kids on the left who find our whole system of government, including democracy, as not important, and you know they seek to transform the country, they want to throw everything out," Chavez said at the June event.

"And on the right I see young people who are falling under the sway of people like Tucker Carlson and Nick Fuentes and Candace Owens, who want to divide Americans, and basically they're going to get to decide what an American is and who gets to count as an American."

Other current and former lawmakers who advised include Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., and former Sens. Bill Bradley, D-N.J., and Doug Jones, D-Ala., who is Alabama's current Democratic gubernatorial candidate.

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

Miscarriage management remains muddled 4 years after Dobbs

BY: SOFIA RESNICK

Mylissa McNeill never expected to be a mother. But when she learned she was pregnant in the spring of 2022, at age 41, she and her partner were happy and excited at the prospect of parenting a little girl they planned to name Maeve.

On June 24, 2022, about one month after McNeill discovered she was pregnant, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in its Dobbs ruling, eliminating the constitutional right to an abortion and empowering states to outlaw it. Missouri was the first state to enact a ban; at that time, McNeill was living in Joplin, Missouri.

In August 2022, McNeill miscarried. It was the beginning of a health crisis that plagues her to this day and that she blames, at least in part, on hospitals' reluctance to provide miscarriage management care that might run afoul of state abortion bans.

Missouri's law prohibited nearly all abortions, but it allowed abortion providers who were charged or sued under the law to escape punishment by arguing that they acted in a "medical emergency" to prevent the death of the pregnant woman or to avert "a serious risk of substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function."

Missouri's ban is no longer in effect — it was overturned by voters in 2024 — but such language is typical: All 13 states that currently have abortion bans allow the procedure to protect the life of the pregnant woman. Some, but not all, of the bans also have exceptions to protect the health of the woman.

But patients and providers have argued in lawsuits challenging the bans that such exceptions are too ill defined to give doctors and hospitals enough confidence to provide timely care. McNeill believes that her persistent health problems are the result of delayed care.

In early August 2022, less than two months after Missouri's ban took effect, McNeill's water broke at about 18 weeks. She says her OB-GYN told her the pregnancy was no longer viable, and she sought an abortion and miscarriage management procedure known as dilation and curettage, or D&C, in hospitals in both Missouri and Kansas (where abortion was legal). However, doctors declined to provide miscarriage care while they were able to detect fetal cardiac activity.

After three days of bleeding and aching, McNeill finally received treatment at a hospital in Illinois. When she had a subsequent tubal ligation to prevent future pregnancies, McNeill said medical staff told her she had scar tissue resulting from an infection she developed after her water broke.

"While they were in there, they saw what happened," McNeill said. "The infection went outside of my uterus. It went to my liver, and my liver is permanently attached in multiple places. It's attached to my uterus; it's attached to my stomach lining."

McNeill says the lingering effects of that infection include severe bouts of vomiting and significant financial hardship as she has struggled to pay for care without steady health care coverage.

"I literally break all the blood vessels in my skin. ... This kind of pain is — there's no word for it," said McNeill, who shared with Stateline pictures of her face covered in red splotches, her nose magenta. "The delay is what really upset me, because women have died with less time than I had, and that delay and the infection that I did get from this by waiting three days, it destroyed my life."

Last year, states including Texas, Kentucky and Tennessee enacted laws designed to provide additional clarity on medical exceptions to their bans, but confusion persists in those states and others. Stories of denied miscarriage care continue to emerge, including in a brand-new lawsuit in Texas, and several deaths have been attributed in part to abortion restrictions, including in Georgia and Texas. Research has linked abortion restrictions to higher rates of maternal death and injury.

"The four years since the Dobbs (v. Jackson Women's Health Organization) decision have unfortunately proven what OB-GYNs already knew: abortion care is inextricable from reproductive health care," Molly Meegan, chief legal officer and general counsel for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, wrote in a statement.

"Bans and restrictions on abortion care have resulted in patients across the country being denied care,

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even in instances of pregnancy loss and miscarriage.”

A new study published last month by the Journal of the American Medical Association found that since the Dobbs decision, in states where abortion bans took effect, miscarriage management has shifted away from medical intervention toward more of a “wait-and-see” approach.

But anti-abortion groups blame doctors and abortion-rights advocates for creating confusion around the medical exceptions in abortion bans, insisting it is clear what is a medically indicated abortion and what is purely elective.

“As architects of the majority of the nation’s pro-life laws, Americans United for Life has been very clear that none prevent women from receiving life-saving miscarriage care. Efforts to suggest otherwise are made in bad faith” said Gavin Oxley, a spokesperson for the group.

“Doctors who delay or altogether deny medical treatment must be held accountable for the harm they inflict upon women. If doctors are not clear on this four years after Dobbs, they clearly have not been listening.”

Dr. Susan Bane, an OB-GYN in Greenville, North Carolina, who is on the board of directors for the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, told Stateline that doctors — especially the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists — have unfairly blamed abortion bans for the denial of medical care to pregnant or miscarrying women.

“There’s nothing, I mean zero, about any of these laws that say you have to have her dying or septic,” Bane said. “I’ve done this hundreds of times in the last 30 years, where the baby was alive, and I sat at the bedside and had an excruciating conversation with a woman to say, ‘I am so sorry, but if we don’t move towards delivery, I’m worried both of you will die.’”

She said her organization supports state laws, like one signed in South Dakota earlier this year, that redefine “abortion” as the intentional ending of the life of the “unborn child.” Supporters say such laws will allow doctors to manage miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies and other pregnancy-related emergencies.

“It’s sad that more clarification isn’t happening, but the blame really started right in my profession.” Bane said.

But Meegan said attempts to legislate health exceptions fall short of protecting all patients.

“There is no law or exception that can account for the immense variety of medical situations that can present in pregnancy,” she wrote. “And there is no additional legislation that can undo the harm created by abortion bans short of repealing the bans themselves.”

McNeill said that following her miscarriage, she lost her job and the health insurance that came with it. She sued and then reached a settlement with the Missouri hospital that she believes denied her prompt care. But she continues to search for relief from her health problems, and says she has racked up substantial medical debt.

She and her husband moved to Arkansas and then Kansas in search of the financial stability that has eluded them since her miscarriage almost four years ago.

“My debt is in the millions with all of this illness without coverage for long periods,” McNeill said. “Now that my credit is destroyed, I’ll never be able to buy a house again while in this health.”

Stateline reporter Sofia Resnick can be reached at sresnick@stateline.org.

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Sofia Resnick covers reproductive rights for Stateline. She has been a journalist for 20 years, covering reproductive health policy and politics for more than a decade, specializing in stories about how the religious right has manipulated science to change policy and tracking the long tail of the fall of Roe v. Wade.

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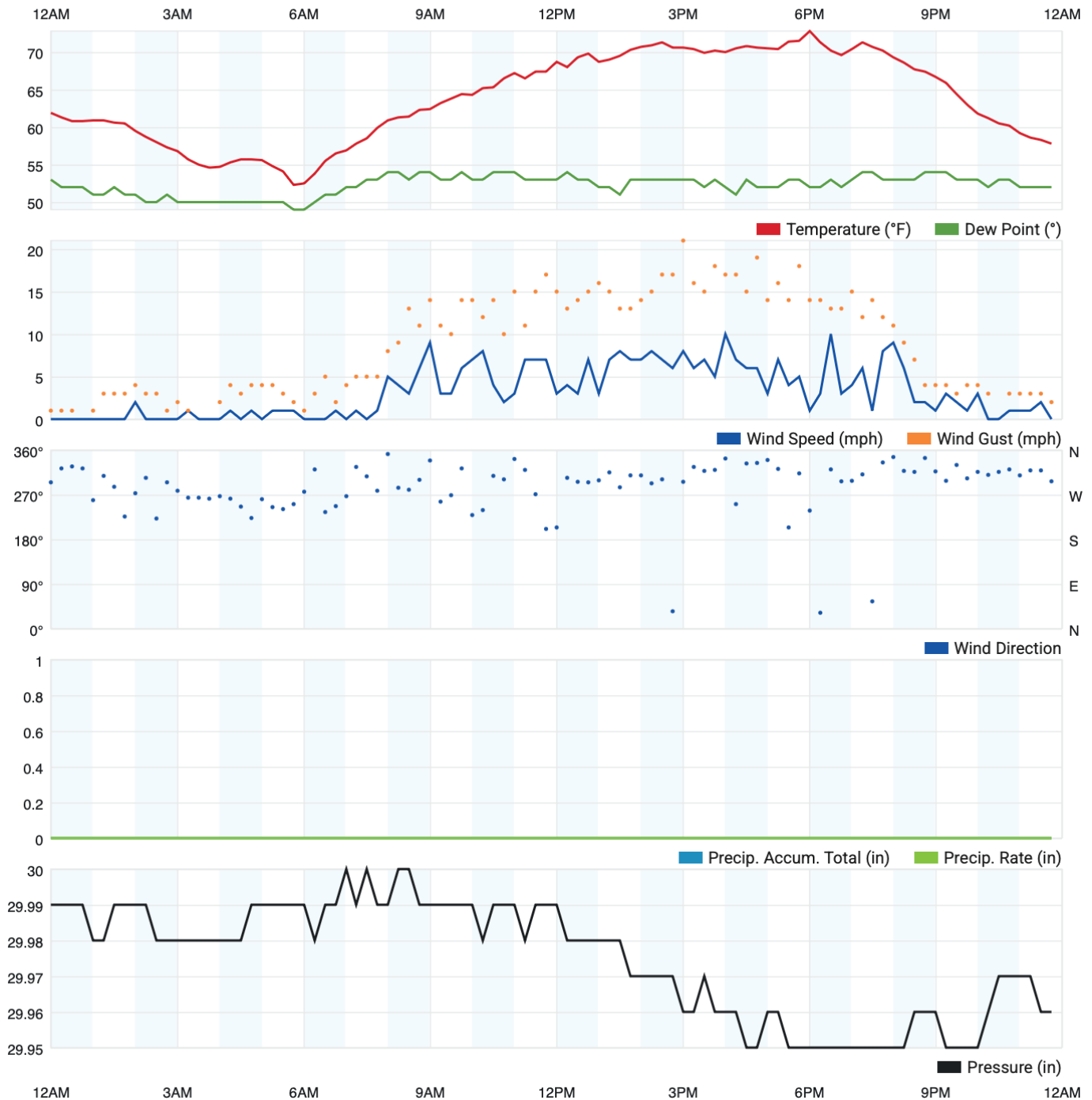
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 24, 2026



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Today



High: 77 °F

Mostly Sunny

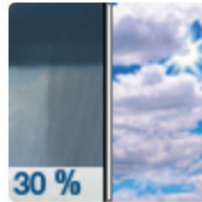
Tonight



Low: 56 °F

Increasing
Clouds

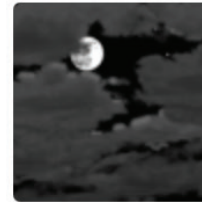
Friday



High: 81 °F

Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 64 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Saturday



High: 86 °F

Breezy.
Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers



TODAY

Highs: 70s



TONIGHT

Lows: 55°

30-70% chance of showers over central SD overnight.
A few rumbles of thunder over north central SD.



FRIDAY

Highs: 79-83°

20-40% chance of morning showers. Winds out of the
Southeast gusting 20-35 mph, strongest west of the Missouri
River.



Warmer Weather Ahead...

Temperatures in the 80s and 90s this weekend through next week. Elevated
HeatRisk, especially for those sensitive to heat or without cooling/hydration.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/aberndeen

A 30-70% chance of showers over central South Dakota overnight tonight will linger into Friday morning. A few rumbles of thunder over north central South Dakota. Winds will increase out of the southeast on Friday, gusting 20-35 mph, with the strongest winds west of the Missouri River.

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Heating Up this Weekend

High temperatures in the 80s & 90s starting Saturday

Heat Risk: The likelihood that temperatures & humidity to cause negative health impacts (ie heat exhaustion or heat stroke)

Category	Risk of Heat-Related Impacts
Green 0	Little to no risk from expected heat.
Yellow 1	Minor - Primarily affects those who are extremely sensitive to heat and without cooling/hydration.
Orange 2	Moderate - Affects those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without cooling/hydration, and some health systems and industries.
Red 3	Major - Affects anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems and industries.
Magenta 4	Extreme - Rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with no overnight relief affecting anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems, industries, and infrastructure.

Maximum HeatRisk Forecast

	6/25 Thu	6/26 Fri	6/27 Sat	6/28 Sun	6/29 Mon	6/30 Tue
McIntosh	1	1	1	1	1	1
Eagle Butte	0	1	1	1	1	1
Murdo	0	1	2	2	1	1
Mobridge	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pierre	1	1	1	2	2	1
Gettysburg	1	1	1	2	2	1
Eureka	1	1	1	2	2	1
Chamberlain	0	1	1	2	2	2
Miller	0	1	1	2	2	2
Redfield	1	1	1	2	2	2
Aberdeen	1	1	1	2	2	2
Britton	0	1	1	2	2	2
Clark	0	1	1	2	2	2
Webster	0	1	1	2	2	2
Watertown	0	1	2	3	3	3
Sisseton	0	1	1	2	2	2
Milbank	0	1	1	3	3	3
Wheaton	0	1	1	2	2	2



wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/

Above normal temperatures will return this weekend with widespread readings in the 80s and 90s. The combination of these hot temps and high humidity values will increase the danger of heat related illnesses. Heat risk values will increase into Moderate to Major values over portions of eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Moderate affects those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without cooling/hydration. Major affects anyone without cooling/hydration.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 73 °F at 5:57 PM

Low Temp: 52 °F at 5:50 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 2:52 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 41 in 2017

Average High: 83

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.10

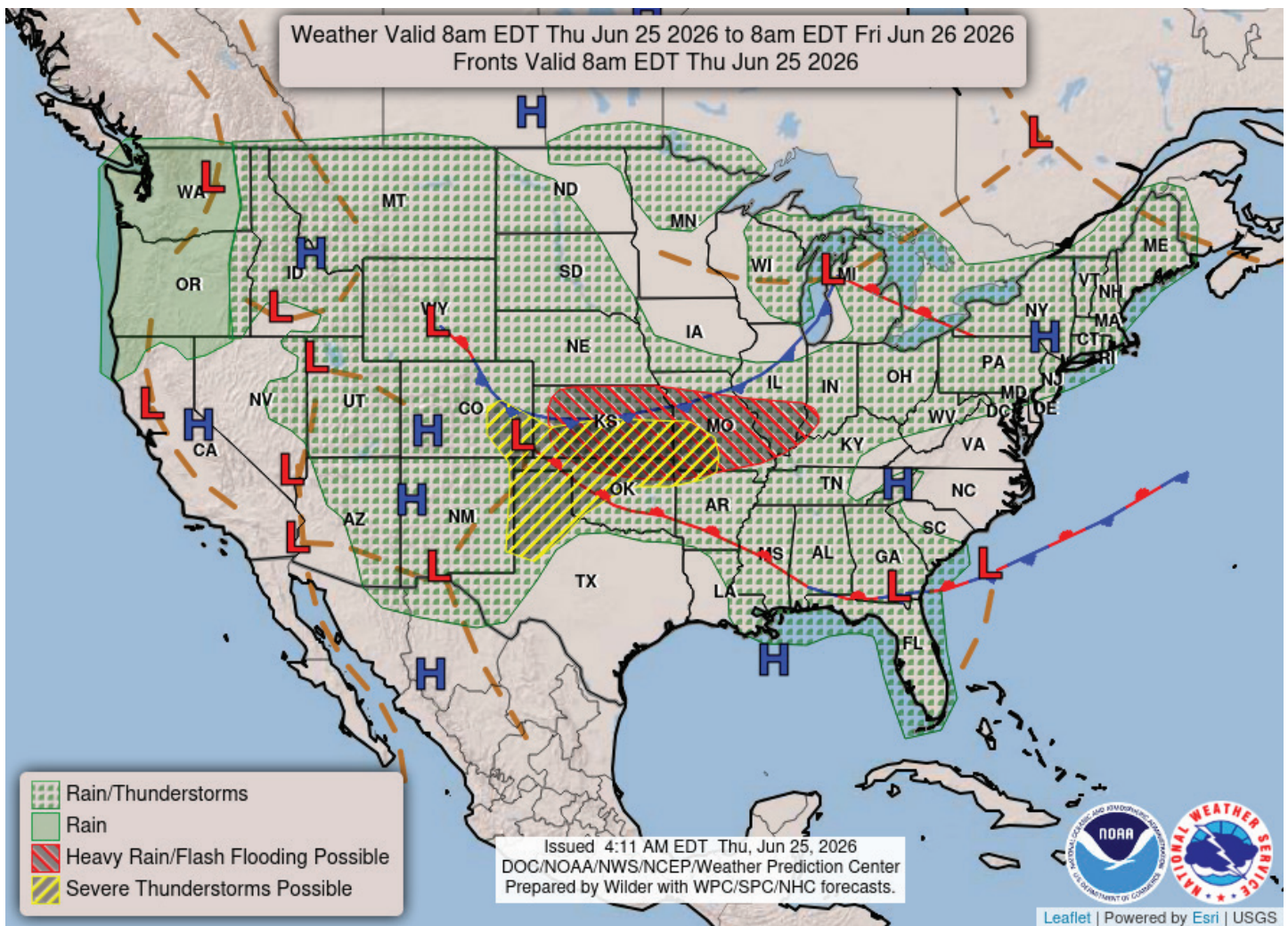
Precip to date in June.: 1.37

Average Precip to date: 10.35

Precip Year to Date: 8.13

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45 am



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Today in Weather History

June 25th, 1914: An estimated F2 tornado moved east from 6 miles southeast of Isabel in Dewey County. The storms damaged three small homes and two barns. Twelve tons of hay was said to have vanished.

June 25th, 1969: On the northeast side of Groton, an F2 to near F3 tornado destroyed a large grain elevator and uprooted trees. Four people were hospitalized. Also, heavy rains caused flash flooding in Sully and Hughes Counties. A bridge near Harrold was washed out. Some rainfall amounts include 5.34 inches at 23N of Highmore, 4.24 at 2N of Onaka, 4.14 at 12SSW of Harrold, 3.90 at 1NW of Faulkton, and 3.73 inches at Ipswich. Unofficial reports of 6 inches fell in and around Harrold.

1749 — A general fast was called on account of drought in Massachusetts. It was the year of the famous dry spring in which fields and villages burned. (David Ludlum)

1925 — The mercury hit 101 degrees at Portland, OR, their earliest 100 degree reading of record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1953 — The temperature at Anchorage soared to 86 degrees, their hottest reading of record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Miami, FL, 107 degrees at Medford, OR, and 111 degrees at Redding CA were new records for the date. It was the third of six straight days of record heat for Miami. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Austin, and gusts to 75 mph at Tulsa OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Fifty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 100 degrees at Erie, PA, and 104 degrees at Cleveland OH established all-time records for those two locations. Highs of 101 degrees at Flint, MI, 105 degrees at Chicago, IL, and 106 degrees at Fort Wayne, IN, equalled all-time records. Thunderstorms in Idaho produced wind gusts to 100 mph west of Bliss and north of Crouch, injuring 29 persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Tropical depression Allison, the remnants of what was earlier Cosme (a hurricane over the Pacific Ocean which dissipated as it crossed northern Mexico), began to spread heavy rain into southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary)



How to Know God's Will

**When you spend consistent time in the Word and authentic prayer,
the Holy Spirit will enable you to discern His will.**

Proverbs 3:5-6: 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

It can be easy to fool ourselves into believing that what we want to do is also what God wants us to do. When we believe we've heard from the Lord, it is important to ask ourselves some questions:

Is the message I heard consistent with God's Word? The Lord will never tell you to do anything that goes against His Word. If you feel prompted to do something contrary to Scripture, you can be certain that it is not of the Lord.

Can I confidently ask God to enable me to do this? If you are feeling uneasy about requesting God's help, that may be a sign the direction did not originate with Him.

Is it wise? The heavenly Father never calls believers to act foolishly. If there is no discernible purpose in the action, you may need to question whether the message was from Him.

Does it fit with my identity in Christ? As God's child, you are being conformed to the likeness of Christ. If you feel led to do something that is inconsistent with the character of Jesus, then you can be sure God hasn't called you to do it.

The Lord is with you, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, enabling you to hear His voice and perceive His guidance for your life (John 14:26). Before rushing into action, ask Him to guide you to make good decisions.

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

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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.26

3 4 10 36 37 5

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.23.26

48 51 60 63 66 20

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$489,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 32 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.26

26 39 45 49 51 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$30,800,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 47 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.26

2 12 13 26 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$151,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 2 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.26

3 11 20 31 65 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 31 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.26

13 14 16 21 38 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$348,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 31 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

South Dakota incumbent Republican lawmaker facing felony election fraud counts

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An incumbent South Dakota legislative leader is facing two felony counts, accused of falsifying signatures to put candidates forward for state Republican Party positions without them knowing.

Republican state Sen. Thomas Pischke of Dell Rapids represents a deep red district outside Sioux Falls and is seeking a third term in November. He faces two felony counts of knowingly submitting a falsified or forged document.

Pischke turned himself in to the Minnehaha County Jail on Tuesday and was released on a promise to appear for all future court dates, the sheriff's office said. An initial hearing is set for July 7.

Pischke has agreed to step away from his duties in the party, including serving on the executive board of the Minnehaha County Republicans, as the case plays out, said Jim Eschenbaum, chair of the South Dakota Republican Party.

"It's a bad optic for the party," Eschenbaum said Wednesday. "I'm disappointed that this has happened. But we also have to just be honest about what's going on, you know, and deal with it."

The Associated Press left email messages this week for Pischke and his attorney seeking comment.

If convicted of a felony, Pischke would not be able to hold a position with the state Republican Party, Eschenbaum said. It is unclear whether Pischke would be able to serve in the Legislature. State law says any person convicted of perjury, bribery or an infamous crime may not serve in the Legislature.

The Associated Press left phone messages Wednesday with the Legislative Research Council and state Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr seeking clarification.

Jessica Meyers, vice chair of the South Dakota Democratic Party, said any official who interferes with a public process should be held accountable.

"We believe in free and fair elections at every level of the political process," she said.

The biennial Republican Party state convention begins Thursday, but Pischke will not be there. At the convention, precinct committee people serve as delegates and voting members to determine party leadership and help set the party's agenda. Outside the convention, committee people perform duties in their communities like contacting and registering voters.

The charges against Pischke came after a monthslong investigation into the filings. The county auditor's office had identified 16 forms for precinct committee positions with suspected fraudulent signatures and discrepancies with registered voting addresses.

The auditor's office called the nominees on the suspected fraudulent forms, and the majority said they didn't fill them out. None were put on the ballot during the June Republican primary, according to Eschenbaum.

Pischke admitted to filling out his own form at the auditor's office to run for precinct committeeman but he denied filling out forms for others, the affidavit stated. He won the position in June, according to the auditor's office.

The investigation uncovered DNA evidence matching Pischke on envelopes containing the forms and used surveillance video to identify a vehicle near a mail drop box that was registered to Pischke.

Pischke ran unopposed in GOP Senate primary. He is facing Bryan Breitling, a former Republican state lawmaker who is running as an independent, in the November general election.

Breitling said Tuesday that he entered the race because the district needs a senator with integrity.

"These charges are the latest on a long list of poor judgments made by the senator," he said.

Dozens of states could face new costs because of high error rates in SNAP food aid

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Several dozen states could have to fork over millions of dollars to provide food aid to lower-income residents, if they don't cut down on payment errors in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Nine states, meanwhile, won't have to pay a penny toward SNAP benefits, because their error rates are so low that they won an exemption from a cost-sharing requirement included in a big tax-and-spending law signed by President Donald Trump.

Data released Wednesday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides a first look at the winners — and potential losers — under the new law.

The error rate refers to the percentage of SNAP benefits paid either above or below what people should have received, primarily because of mistakes. While low-error states are guaranteed to owe nothing when the annual cost-sharing requirement begins in October 2027, others will have another year to try to reduce their errors and decrease the hit to their budgets.

States with high error rates will have to make choices that could impact their residents. To fund SNAP benefits, do they spend less on public schools, law enforcement or mental health care? To save money, do they squeeze people off SNAP by making it harder to stay in the program? Or do they drop out entirely from the federal food aid program that's been around for decades?

"There are billions of dollars that are at stake that states will have to find the money to be able to pay if they want to continue to operate a SNAP program," said Chloe Green, assistant director for policy at the American Public Human Services Association.

Fewer people are receiving SNAP benefits

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known informally as food stamps, provides monthly payments to help low-income residents to buy food. More than 37 million people nationwide received SNAP benefits in March, according to preliminary USDA figures. That's down nearly 5 million people — over 11% — from a year earlier.

A law signed by Trump last July expanded requirements for many adult SNAP recipients to work, volunteer or participate in job training. The new work and cost-share requirements are intended to increase accountability for participants and states — and to provide federal savings that offset new tax cuts.

"These payment error rates are further proof that state accountability is severely lacking in SNAP," said Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins.

Trump's law shifts costs to states

Administrative costs for SNAP currently are split 50-50 between the federal government and states. But federal law requires states to start paying 75% of SNAP administrative costs this October.

The federal government currently covers the full cost of SNAP benefits provided to people. But beginning in October 2027, states with SNAP error rates of 6% or greater could have to pay a portion of the benefits.

The error rates released Wednesday, which cover the 2025 fiscal year, are the first that matter. Federal law says states can choose to use either their 2025 or 2026 error rates when determining what percentage of SNAP benefits they must pay starting in October 2027.

9 states with low error rates will owe nothing

South Dakota had the lowest error rate last year at about 2.5%. Nebraska had an error rate of 5.9% — just barely below the cutoff to avoid paying part of the SNAP benefits. Other states with error rates below 6% were Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Vermont, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Federal law sets a sliding scale for how much money states must pay toward SNAP benefits. States with error rates between 6%-8% will have to eventually pay 5% of the benefit costs. Those with error rates between 8%-10% will have to pay 10% of benefit costs. And those with error rates over 10% will have to pay 15% of benefit costs.

Error rates could translate to millions of dollars

Consider Missouri as an example. It had an error rate of 8.7% last year. Unless it improves next year,

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the state will have pick up 10% of SNAP benefit costs starting in October 2027.

Missouri residents received about \$1.5 billion of SNAP benefits in 2024, the latest year for which federal data is available. If that same amount of benefits is paid in the future, Missouri could have to cover \$150 million of the costs; that's a sum greater than the total budgeted for several state prisons.

6 states with high errors earn delays

An exception in the federal law gives states with the highest error rates more time to try to reduce them. States with error rates of at least 13.34% last year will receive a delay in their cost-share requirements until at least the 2029 fiscal year.

The delay will benefit Alaska, which had the highest error rate of over 23%. Other jurisdictions receiving a one-year, cost-share delay are Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon and the District of Columbia.

More states still have a shot at getting an extension. States whose error rates are at least 13.34% in 2026 could have their cost-sharing requirements delayed until the 2030 fiscal year.

Survey shows some states could end food aid

A recent survey of state agencies that run SNAP found that most already are analyzing the root causes of their payment errors. The mistakes appear to be evenly attributable to SNAP recipients and program administrators, and many states are planning to increase staff focused on eliminating errors, according to the survey released by American Public Human Services Association.

But states also are planning for cuts, if they are forced to pay a portion of SNAP benefits. More than a quarter of the states responding to the survey said they could consider narrowing eligibility policies, and four states said they could consider withdrawing from SNAP entirely. The report did not list those states.

Advocates push for a nationwide delay

Some advocates for low-income residents want Congress to postpone the SNAP cost-share requirements for all states. That would require a change in federal law.

The error-rate data "really underscore the urgent need for Congress to delay this massive cost shift to state budgets," said Katie Bergh, senior policy analyst at the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Many people already are struggling with high grocery prices, and "this is coming at a time when millions of people have already lost food assistance," Bergh said.

At least 164 dead and 971 injured after powerful quakes rock Venezuela, acting president says

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and JUAN PABLO ARRAEZ Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — At least 164 people have died and 971 were injured after a pair of powerful quakes rocked Venezuela, Acting President Delcy Rodríguez said Thursday.

The acting president had said earlier that at least 32 people have died after Wednesday evening's 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes, and that the toll was expected to rise.

The quakes were among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century and could be felt throughout the region. Buildings were evacuated in places as far away as Brazil's Amazon, about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Venezuela's capital, Caracas.

Footage on state TV showed three children, covered in dust but alive, pulled from the rubble in La Guaira state, which Rodríguez described as a "disaster zone" and the area hardest hit by the quakes.

The quakes, among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century, could be felt throughout the region, with buildings evacuated in places as far away as Brazil's Amazon, about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Venezuela's capital, Caracas.

While Venezuela sits near multiple fault lines, its position straddling the South American and Caribbean plates makes strong earthquakes much less common than in other parts of Latin America.

Rodríguez declared a state of emergency in an address to the nation late Wednesday, saying the quakes caused damage in several states. She asked health care professionals to report to hospitals to assist the injured.

The casualty figures she released early Thursday — including at least 700 injured — excluded La Guaira,

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which sits north of Caracas on the coast, and so the numbers are expected to rise.

"Dozens of buildings have collapsed there ... and we are currently carrying out intensive rescue operations to save lives," Rodríguez said.

Residents fled their homes in panic

Television broadcasts Thursday showed rescue workers using power tools to work their way into piles of rubble. Many people searching for the missing appeared to be regular people, rather than professionals. Collapsed buildings, toppled electric poles and debris blocked streets.

During the quakes, people ran from swaying buildings in Caracas, many visibly shocked when they turned back to see destroyed walls that left furniture visible from the street. Columns of dust rose in two typically busy neighborhoods in the capital.

"It started off gently and then gradually grew, and in the end, we all had to leave our houses, go outside and gather together," Caracas resident Hector Ricci said.

Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello urged people to remain outside as aftershocks could further damage structures, and many people stayed on the streets for hours, some sitting on the ground hugging pets as dust gathered around them. Others spent the night in parked cars, subway stations and other public places.

Parts of the capital lost power and cellphone coverage, and the earthquakes damaged and closed Simón Bolívar International Airport, the country's main airport, Rodríguez said.

In Caracas, subway services were suspended and natural gas shut off, she said. Classes will also be canceled for several days, and the Ministry of Education said some school buildings would be used as shelters and donation centers.

Roberto Gamas, another Caracas resident, said the building he was in "shook from side to side. Unreal. The force was incredibly strong."

The lack of cellphone signal in parts of Venezuela deepened the distress of many families, particularly those among the more than 7.7 million people who have left the country during its protracted crisis and who struggled to reach relatives inside the country.

Venezuela opposition leader María Corina Machado, herself in exile, sent wishes on X for "strength, serenity, and solidarity."

Venezuela was hit twice by large quakes

The U.S. Geological Survey said the first earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.2, hit west of Moron on the Caribbean coast, about 170 kilometers (105 miles) west of Caracas. It had a depth of 22 kilometers (about 14 miles).

The USGS reported a 7.5 magnitude earthquake just a minute later, with a depth of 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) and an epicenter 16 kilometers (10 miles) southwest of Moron.

Several governments offered assistance

Offers of help poured in from countries around the world.

U.S. Secretary of State Rubio said in a post on X early Thursday that the United States is "immediately deploying search and rescue teams, medical resources, and humanitarian assistance to Venezuela."

Rodríguez — who became acting president after an American military operation captured her predecessor, Nicolás Maduro, and brought him to the U.S. to stand trial — thanked U.S. President Donald Trump. She said in an X post later that she spoke with Rubio by phone without sharing details. She also expressed thanks to the leaders of various nations who have sent messages of support and offers of help.

Ecuador ordered the delivery of humanitarian aid, and Rodríguez said Qatar, Mexico and El Salvador had already sent rescue personnel.

"We send you all our solidarity and our prayers. Stay strong, Venezuela," El Salvador President Nayib Bukele, once diametrically opposed to Venezuela's government, wrote in a post on X.

Earthquakes impact the region

Buildings in Manaus, Belem and Macapa in Brazil's Amazon were evacuated, according to reports on TV Globo. The quakes also were felt in Colombia's Caribbean and northeast regions.

The U.S. Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued several tsunami alerts that were quickly lifted.

While uncommon in Venezuela, earthquakes are frequent along the Pacific coast, including in Mexico and Chile, which both sit along the seismically active tectonic belt known as the Ring of Fire, an area that the USGS says is responsible for 90% of earthquakes.

Shiite Muslims mark holy day of Ashoura after months of war in Iran and Lebanon

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Shiite Muslims around the world on Thursday marked Ashoura, a holy day symbolizing sacrifice and martyrdom that holds special significance for many this year after months of war in Iran and Lebanon.

Ashoura commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D. Imam Hussein was killed with his family and companions after refusing to pledge allegiance to the Umayyad caliphate.

The event cemented the schism between Sunni and Shiite Islam and remains a powerful symbol of resistance against oppression and injustice.

The holiest day in the Shiite calendar

This year, Ashoura comes after months of war in Iran and Lebanon, homes to two of the world's largest Shiite populations. Iran and the U.S. this week launched talks aimed at finalizing a fragile ceasefire agreement.

On the first day of the war, on Feb. 28, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed in an Israeli airstrike. The 86-year-old Khamenei was not just Iran's top political leader. He also had a final say on all religious matters and was revered by millions of Shiites worldwide. Ashoura comes just days before his funeral procession.

The war also spilled over into Lebanon, where Iran's key ally, the Hezbollah militant group, has been battling Israeli troops for months.

Hezbollah entered the fighting days into the war by firing rockets into northern Israel in solidarity with Tehran. That sparked widespread Israeli aerial bombardment and a ground invasion that decimated large swaths of predominantly Shiite areas in southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs.

Ashoura comes as many of the more than one million displaced Lebanese people are trying to return to their villages in southern Lebanon. Cities and towns had held sermons and events in the buildup to the holy day surrounded by buildings reduced to rubble and ruins.

Ashoura is the holiest day in the Shiite calendar, marked by traditional mourning rituals that include chest-beating, elegies and lamentations. It is held on the 10th day of the month of Muharram.

Mourners observe the holy day in Iran

In war-stricken Iran, black-clad mourners filled streets, mosques and neighborhood religious halls across Tehran for a public holiday that brought much of the capital to a halt.

Shops were shuttered in many areas as processions of men beating their chests marched past and loudspeakers played elegies. Volunteers handed out tea and dates.

The previous evening mourners had gathered at the shrine of Imam Ruhollah Khomeini south of Tehran in a ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian and other officials, Iranian state media reported. Khomeini led the 1979 revolution that ushered in Iran's Islamic republic.

In a social media post laden with an apparent message of resistance to the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran, Pezeshkian noted how Hussein taught people to stand against oppression, the temptation of power and the pursuit of self-interest.

"We should neither oppress, nor accept oppression, nor remain silent before it," he wrote.

The annual ceremonies came as Iran's leadership continues to draw on Ashoura's language of sacrifice and resistance at a time of deep political and economic pressure.

The faithful in Lebanon attend sermons and visit graves

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Families in the Lebanese coastal city of Tyre who lost relatives fighting with Hezbollah or working as paramedics wept during a sermon on the third day of Muharram. A cleric, who sat between portraits of current Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei and Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Kassem, compared the struggles the modern-day leaders faced in the war to that of Hussein and his companions in Karbala.

Banners in red and black bearing Hussein's name were hung on every street.

In Beirut's southern suburbs, many flocked to the grave of former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli strike in September 2024.

Security is raised in Pakistan to protect the Shiite minority

Elsewhere, Pakistan deployed thousands of police and paramilitary personnel across the country following intelligence reports warning of possible militant attacks on Shiite Muslims, a minority in the predominantly Sunni country.

Although most Sunnis and Shiites live peacefully alongside one another, militant groups have repeatedly targeted Shiite communities, mosques, and religious gatherings in sectarian attacks that have claimed hundreds of lives.

As members of Pakistan's Shiite minority prepare to take part in mourning processions, mobile phone service in some areas is expected to be suspended temporarily to help prevent attacks.

"Imam Hussein is a symbol of the highest struggle and sacrifice," said Saadia Shah, 33, as she entered a congregation hall in the eastern city of Lahore with her two children. "His name gives us the courage to stand up to tyranny, to say what is right and oppose what is wrong."

An oil tanker navigates the Strait of Hormuz despite threats from Iran's Revolutionary Guard

By JON GAMBRELL and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A Liberian oil tanker made its way out of the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday despite threats to shipping from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, using a new route close to Oman's shore that has been promoted by a U.N. maritime agency.

The transit of the Stoic Warrior and the threats come as tensions rise between Iran and the United States over the terms of their interim accord aimed at permanently ending the Iran war.

From getting ships through the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf to the future of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, the two nations are increasingly debating the terms of the deal signed last week.

Through the signing of the memorandum of understanding, the U.S. and Iran agreed to a 60-day period to iron out these and other details. Until that happens — during private talks — leaders from both countries will also continue to negotiate in public, raising the risks of derailing the shaky ceasefire in the region.

On a trip to the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke Thursday with Gulf Arab officials in Bahrain, the island kingdom in the Persian Gulf home to the Navy's 5th Fleet, trying to assuage their concerns.

The flareup of fighting in Lebanon between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah has threatened the deal. On Wednesday, Israel launched an airstrike that killed two people in southern Lebanon, the country's state-run news agency said. It was Israel's first airstrike on Lebanon since the latest ceasefire took effect on Saturday.

Tanker sails through Strait of Hormuz

The Stoic Warrior — signaling that it planned to transit the Strait of Hormuz — took off early Thursday morning along the coast of the United Arab Emirates and then Oman.

The vessel then traveled around Oman's Musandam Peninsula fairly close to the shore, part of a route that Oman laid out alongside the International Maritime Organization, an agency of the United Nations that oversees shipping at sea.

North of the route is the Traffic Separation Scheme, the route in the center of the strait that for decades ships moved through freely. The route is used for transport of about a fifth of all the world's oil and natural gas.

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However, there has been the report of at least one mine sighted in the water after the Guard said that it mined the passage during the war that started on Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran. The threat of mines shut off the route.

Even before the deal, some ships had been getting out of the strait, with U.S. military support. But the U.N. agency's effort is the latest to free trapped vessels. The shipping company Maersk said Thursday that its container ship the Maersk Baltimore and another chartered vessel had also made it out the strait.

The naval arm of the Revolutionary Guard, apparently reacting to the new IMO's route, issued an angry warning Thursday, carried by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency.

"A few hours ago, without notice or coordination with the Islamic Republic of Iran, some authorities announced a new route for ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, which is unacceptable and completely dangerous," the Guard said.

"It is hereby notified to all that the only authorized route for passing through the Strait of Hormuz is the one declared by the Islamic Republic of Iran," the Iranian force said. "Vessel traffic outside these routes is extremely dangerous and prohibited."

"Violators will be dealt with," it added, without elaborating.

There were no immediate reports of any incidents in the strait as the Stoic Warrior passed. Several ships trailed behind it, according to ship-tracking data.

Anwar Gargash, a senior Emirati diplomat, warned Iran on Thursday over trying to impede the strait or put fees on vessels plying its waters.

"New geopolitical facts cannot be imposed on the Arab Gulf states as a result of a treacherous aggression against them," Gargash wrote on X. "It sows new seeds of discord and conflict for the future. And this is precisely what applies to the Strait of Hormuz."

Rubio holds talks in Bahrain

The U.S. secretary of state met with foreign ministers from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, trying to assure them their interests would be protected in any agreement reached with Iran, including when it comes to the Strait of Hormuz.

"We want to ensure that in any decisions that are made throughout this negotiating process, the interest of our partners and our allies in the region are always taken into account," Rubio said. "There is no part in this deal that's undertaken that in any way undermines the security, the stability of the prosperity of any of our partners in the Gulf region."

The GCC countries have expressed reservations about the limitation of the U.S.-Iran deal signed last week, including conflicting claims over the strait and the fact that the memorandum of understanding does not specifically cover Iran's nuclear or ballistic missile programs.

Thursday's meeting in Manama, Bahrain's capital, came ahead of an expected meeting in Oman between the GCC and Iran to discuss maritime security and safety in the strait.

Speaking on behalf of the GCC, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani thanked the U.S. for its support, saying that because of the agreement, "today we see a glimmer of hope for our region" but stressed that Iran must comply with its commitments.

"While this progress is encouraging, it is critically important that Iran adheres to its obligations," al-Zayani said.

Lebanon remains a flashpoint

Israel's military said on Thursday that a reservist soldier was killed and another hurt in southern Lebanon, where troops are occupying swaths of the country. At least 37 soldiers have been killed in Lebanon or northern Israel during the fighting, as well one civilian defense contractor. Two civilians in northern Israel have also been killed.

Over 4,000 people in Lebanon have been killed in Israeli strikes since this latest Israel-Hezbollah war began in March, two days after the Iran war started and when the Lebanese militant group fired at Israel.

Rebound in tech shares pushes world markets higher, while oil

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prices fall

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — World shares were mostly higher Thursday, led by tech-driven gains in Japan and South Korea as major computer chipmakers' stocks surged following upbeat earnings reports from U.S. giants like Qualcomm and Micron Technology.

Oil prices slipped closer to where they were before the war with Iran began.

Qualcomm's share price surged nearly 7% in afterhours trading after the company announced it had raised its forecast for revenue this year to \$40 billion from \$22 billion. It also announced a new computer chip for data centers called Dragonfly C1000 CPU that Meta plans to use.

Micron Technology's shares jumped 18.5% in afterhours trading after it upgraded its forecast and exceeded analysts' estimates.

The future for the S&P 500 gained 0.8%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged 0.1% higher.

Germany's DAX advanced 0.5% to 24,859.99. The CAC 40 in Paris was up 0.2% to 8,398.21 and Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.1% to 10,473.69.

In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index surged 4.6% to a record close of 72,366.34 as traders snapped up shares in technology companies. Chipmaker Tokyo Electron's shares gained 7.8%, while chip testing equipment maker Advantest's shares soared 15%.

South Korea's benchmark, the Kospi, hit a new record, surging 5.4% to 8,930.30 after briefly topping 9,000. Samsung Electronics' shares gained 5.3% and SK Hynix leaped 13%.

Elsewhere in Asia, gains were more modest.

Taiwan's Taiex climbed 0.5% and the Sensex in India was up 0.7%.

The Shanghai Composite index picked up 0.2% to 4,120.28, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1.4% to 23,090.27.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.7% to 8,748.70.

On Wednesday, stocks wavered to a mixed close on Wall Street as losses for several tech giants including Microsoft weighed on the market. The S&P 500 fell 0.1% and the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which is less weighted with tech stocks, rose 10.4%.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite fell 0.4%.

Microsoft lost 2.3% and Oracle slumped 4.6%.

Many large tech companies have been behind Wall Street's record-setting run throughout the year, but analysts have warned their valuations may have become stretched.

Google's parent company Alphabet slipped 0.2%. The company is replacing Verizon in the Dow on Monday. Its inclusion in the S&P 500 means more to investors, however, because 401(k) accounts are much more likely to include an S&P 500 index fund than anything tied to the Dow.

Alphabet will become the fifth Magnificent 7 tech company to join the Dow. The others are Apple, Amazon, Microsoft and Nvidia.

Oil companies had some of the biggest losses as prices fell while the U.S. and Iran negotiate a possible end to their war. Exxon Mobil fell 2% and Chevron lost 2.6%. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 3.8% to \$73.87 a barrel. It has been trading below \$80 in recent days but is still above the roughly \$70 per barrel it was trading at in late February before the war began.

U.S. crude prices fell 3.9% to \$70.34 a barrel.

Early Thursday, Brent was down 0.8% at \$73.32 a barrel, while U.S. benchmark crude lost 0.5% to \$69.88 a barrel.

Some of the bigger winners on Wall Street included homebuilders following approval of legislation beneficial to the industry. KB Home surged 16.7% and D.R. Horton jumped 6.7%.

The Federal Reserve will get an update on inflation later Thursday, when its preferred measure for prices is released. Economists expect the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, or PCE, to show that prices rose 4.1% in May. That would be the highest level in three years.

Inflation has been rising as tariffs raise costs for many goods. It worsened as the war pushed energy

and shipping prices higher and that impact is expected to linger even as oil and gasoline prices fall.

In other dealings early Thursday, the U.S. dollar rose to 161.81 Japanese yen from 161.79 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1362 from \$1.1359.

US Congress welcomes Taiwan's parliamentary leader to Washington, affirms support for the island

By DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday pledged firm support for the self-governed island of Taiwan as they welcomed Han Kuo-yu, president of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan, to Washington, at a time the Trump administration is reviewing a \$14 billion arms sales package to Taiwan, months after it got preliminary congressional approval.

More than 30 House representatives, both Democratic and Republican, streamed into the reception at the Longworth House Office Building to show their support, including Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, D.-California; Rep. Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican and former chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; and Ted Lieu, a California Democrat who serves as the vice chair of the House Democratic Caucus.

"I love Taiwan," declared McCaul, as he welcomed Han. "It's very important to me to say that the United States supports you, Mr. Speaker."

"The support for Taiwan is bipartisan and bicameral — both houses, both parties," Pelosi said. "It's about peace. It's also about commerce in terms of keeping the ships able to travel here."

Han, who is leading an eight-person parliamentary delegation, arrived in the nation's capital on Tuesday night after a stop in Phoenix, Arizona, where the chipmaker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. is building new fabs and producing advanced chips crucial to powering the A.I. boom. TSMC is the poster child of Taiwan's importance to the U.S. economy.

The delegation met seven Democratic senators earlier Wednesday, including New Hampshire Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It wasn't clear if Republicans senators also met the visiting lawmakers.

The Democrats called on the Trump administration to move ahead with the \$14 billion in arms sales to Taiwan without further delay. "We remain committed to maintaining close and friendly relations with Taiwan, providing Taiwan with arms for self-defense and supporting deterrence against growing coercion from the People's Republic of China," they said in a statement.

Taiwan, which Beijing claims to be part of the Chinese territory and vows to seize by force if necessary, is a highly thorny issue in U.S.-China relations. Washington is obligated by a domestic law to provide the island with sufficient hardware to fend off any invasion from the mainland. President Donald Trump, after his May trip to Beijing, has said he would be reviewing the \$14 billion arms sales package, which Beijing strongly opposes. Trump also has suggested that the arms sales package could be a bargaining chip. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said the U.S. policy on Taiwan remains unchanged.

On Wednesday, several U.S. lawmakers showed their support for the arms sales package.

"I'm here today ... to affirm in the strongest terms that Taiwan is not a bargaining chip. It is an island of freedom. And we need to do all we can to preserve it," said Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D.-Texas. "I believe we need to make available every weapon that Taiwan needs in its defense as quickly as it becomes possible."

Lieu criticized the Trump administration for holding up the \$14 billion package. "I urge the administration to reverse that and to allow their arms sale to proceed," he said.

Han, who is a member of Taiwan's opposition KMT party, in his speech complimented the U.S. for its achievements in the past 250 years and said the island, like the U.S., cherishes the value of freedom and democracy and that both sides shoulder the responsibilities of safeguarding the democratic system and of maintaining regional stability and peace.

Han touted the robust trade between Taiwan and the U.S. The island of 23 million people has surpassed Germany as the fourth-largest trading partner of the U.S., largely driven by the demand for Taiwan's ad-

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vanced chips and other tech hardware.

Han also urged the U.S. to help Taiwan gain more international space. No country can have diplomatic ties with both Beijing and Taipei because of China's territorial claim over the island. Only 12 governments, including the Holy See, still recognize Taiwan's statehood. Beijing also has kept Taiwan out of many international organizations, including the World Health Organization.

"On the international stage, Taiwan feels very lonely in its heart," Han said. "I am here asking Taiwan's good friends in Congress ... to help us participate in global activities."

Han is scheduled to leave on Friday for the inaugural nonstop flight by the Taiwanese carrier EVA Air between Washington Dulles International Airport and Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, which has also been touted as proof of deepening U.S.-Taiwan ties.

Switzerland wraps up first place in Group B at the World Cup with a 2-1 victory over Canada

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Soccer Writer

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Switzerland put a damper on Canada's World Cup party.

The Swiss got goals from Rubén Vargas and Johan Manzambi to beat Canada 2-1 on Wednesday and win Group B. Switzerland will get a week of rest before returning to Vancouver to face one of the eight best third-place finishers on July 2.

"I think that we deserve to be where we are right now," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "In three days from now, we will know the opponent of the next match, and now we have the possibility to watch this tournament, and to watch the matches, and we will take what we will get."

Canada dropped to second place in the group and will play in the knockout round for the first time in team history. But the Canadians had been hoping for a win or a draw on Wednesday so they would play their round-of-32 match on home soil.

Instead, Canada will travel Inglewood, California, to play Sunday against South Africa, which beat South Korea 1-0 Wednesday night in Monterrey, Mexico, to finish second in Group A.

"We wanted to be here in Vancouver, but we still have a massive opportunity ahead of us to find a way to still electrify the nation, even though it'll be from Los Angeles," Canada coach Jesse Marsch said.

After Manzambi came off the bench and scored two goals in Switzerland's 4-1 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina on Thursday, he earned a spot in the starting lineup against Canada. The 20-year-old midfielder became the youngest player to score two goals off the bench in the World Cup and is among the breakout young stars of the tournament.

Vargas broke through for Switzerland about 40 seconds into the second half with a strike that sailed past sliding Canada goalkeeper Maxime Crépeau, hit the post and went into the net.

Breel Embolo then crossed the ball to Manzambi, whose shot went through the hands of Crépeau to put the Swiss up 2-0 in the 57th minute. The goal quieted the red-clad sellout crowd, which included Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani.

Canada pulled a goal back in the 76th. Promise David scored with a volley on his first touch of the game about a minute after he came on as a substitute. But despite a flurry of chances, the Canadians couldn't find the second goal to keep them at home.

Switzerland captain Granit Xhaka had a chance in the scoreless first half but his free kick in the 37th minute and sailed over the net as he let out a yell.

Ali Ahmed had one of Canada's best attempts of the first half in the 42nd minute, but his shot to the near post was smothered by Switzerland goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

On Thursday, Canada won its first World Cup match, 6-0 over Qatar, and put itself in position to advance. But the historic victory was bittersweet because Ismaël Koné was stretchered off with a broken left leg. Koné was at Wednesday's game on crutches.

The Swiss opened the World Cup with a lackluster 1-1 draw against Qatar before they routed Bosnia with a flurry of late goals. Considered the favorite in Group B, Switzerland has played at the last five World

Cups and advanced to the round of 16 in the past three.

"We needed some time to get really into this tournament, for many nations that was the case," Yakin said. "There were big teams who won against small countries, so we really needed to get into this tournament fast, and the way we play football now, I'm very happy with that."

Canada, making its third World Cup appearance, opened the tournament with a 2-2 draw against Bosnia.

"We have to give our team a lot of credit. We've had a lot of injuries, we've had a lot of adversity, we've had a lot of injuries, we've had to manage a lot of different situations," Marsch said. "We still got a really good point in the first game, we had a fantastic performance against Qatar and on another day, even though we go down 2-0, maybe we get a goal and maybe we win the group. It was just a matter of fine margins."

Bosnia beat Qatar 3-1 in the other Group B match Wednesday and could still advance as a third-place team. Qatar was eliminated.

Senate Republicans reject war powers resolution after Trump berates them at Capitol meeting

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, STEVEN SLOAN, JOEY CAPPELLETTI and LISA MASCARO Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans who were berated by President Donald Trump over opposition to his war in Iran held a late-night vote Wednesday to try to appease him, rejecting a war powers resolution a day after a similar measure passed.

Trump harangued GOP senators face to face earlier in the day for allowing a vote to block his war in Iran on Tuesday, further escalating a feud that has diverted GOP efforts to focus on election-year affordability issues and brought much of the chamber's business to a halt. He exchanged particularly harsh words with Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of four Republicans who had voted with Democrats on the measure.

Hours later, though, Cassidy was invited to receive a personal briefing on the war at the White House from Vice President JD Vance and envoy Steve Witkoff. Cassidy then returned to the Capitol to vote against a separate but nearly identical war powers resolution.

"I want to thank Vice President Vance and Special Envoy Witkoff for the thorough briefing this afternoon on Iran. I appreciate the quick invitation to the White House to address many of my concerns," said Cassidy, who lost reelection last month after Trump endorsed his opponent, in a post on X.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, a Republican who has repeatedly voted with Democrats to halt the war, voted present this time "to give the President more space and leverage to negotiate a lasting peace," he said on X. The measure failed 47-50-1 just before midnight on Wednesday, and the Senate then left town for a two-week recess.

It's unclear whether the move will be enough to appease Trump, who had called the Republicans "losers" for voting against his war and had called Cassidy a "lunatic" at the lunch after their tense exchange. But the vote was a clear signal to the president from Republican senators who still want to placate him, despite increasing tensions in recent weeks and his decision Wednesday morning to reverse himself and delay signing a housing bill that received overwhelming bipartisan support.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., and a small group of his Senate GOP colleagues called Trump after the vote. Thune told reporters that the president was "pleased with the outcome."

Trump later thanked Thune in a social media post and noted that Cassidy and Paul had switched their votes. "This vote puts Iran on notice!" he wrote.

The war powers measure blocked by the Senate on Wednesday was on a separate track from the nearly identical resolution adopted on Tuesday, which had also been passed by the House. Both votes were largely symbolic, and the measures do not carry the full force of law.

Cassidy had sharp words for Trump

Invited by Florida Sen. Rick Scott to speak at a GOP luncheon in the Capitol, Trump had signaled ahead of time that he would use the closed-door meeting to push senators to pass his proof-of-citizenship voting

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bill. But the conversation was more focused on Tuesday's vote on war powers.

Most Republicans stayed quiet. But Cassidy stood up and defended his vote.

"I stood and said, 'You have not told the American people what's going on,'" Cassidy told reporters after the meeting. "This was supposed to last four weeks, it's lasted four months. Our original objectives have not been achieved."

The two men "went back and forth," Cassidy said, and he "matched his tone and volume." Cassidy said that he eventually de-escalated, but he did not want to be bullied.

"I am voting for war powers until I get a briefing," he said afterward.

Trump repeatedly told Cassidy to sit down, according to a person familiar with the private meeting who was not authorized to discuss it. At one point, the president called the senator a "lunatic."

Publicly, Trump said afterward that they had "a really great meeting." But he hinted at the discord.

"We like everyone in the room," Trump told reporters on his way out. "I don't like a few people, but that's OK."

The luncheon capped weeks of friction between Trump and Senate Republicans and added a new layer of frustration as Tuesday's vote was the first time the Senate had adopted a war powers resolution on the Iran war. Trump made clear he was in no mood to compromise before it even started, calling off a scheduled signing ceremony on a housing bill that passed both chambers overwhelmingly this week and that GOP lawmakers were touting as an election-year achievement.

Trump reverses on housing bill

Republican senators were eager for a conciliatory meeting with the president after escalating tensions in recent weeks. But Trump upended their plans when he declared on social media just beforehand that he wouldn't sign the legislation until they send him the SAVE America Act, his bill to require proof of citizenship for all voters.

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said he doesn't know why Trump is holding the housing bill "hostage" for the voting bill that "will never pass in this Congress."

"It makes no sense to me," Tillis said as he walked into the luncheon.

Thune said the housing legislation, which aims to lower costs, is "an affordability issue," and that "eventually I hope he finds a way to sign it."

It's unclear if Trump might veto the legislation or if the late Wednesday night vote will change his outlook. But by rejecting a public bill signing, Republicans worry that Trump is indicating a level of indifference to voters' affordability concerns heading into November's midterm elections.

Trump and Senate Republicans have been at odds

Trump's move on the housing bill is his latest reversal after weeks of being at odds with Senate Republicans.

Trump has blocked the Senate from confirming one of his own nominees, asked them to fund parts of his White House ballroom project despite opposition and forced them to defend the Iran war even as they question the strategy and endgame.

Trump has also helped whittle down his own support in the Senate after endorsing primary challengers to two GOP incumbents who were previously reliable votes for his agenda — Cassidy and Texas Sen. John Cornyn. Both men have become more critical of Trump since losing reelection.

"If we're going to win the midterm elections, we need to get on the same page," Cornyn said ahead of the meeting. "We're not on the same page now, and that I think is dangerous."

Trump pushes Thune on SAVE America Act

Trump has pressed Republicans for months to kill the Senate filibuster and focus on the proof-of-citizenship voting bill, even though Thune has repeatedly told him that neither has the votes.

While Thune remains popular in his conference and cordial with the president, he has spent much of his time lately telling Trump what he doesn't want to hear. Thune said Tuesday that while Trump and some in their conference want to see the voting bill pass, "it's just not realistic."

Thune devoted weeks of floor time to the voting bill earlier this year and has said he supports it. But he has repeatedly said there aren't enough votes to scrap the filibuster that triggers a 60-vote threshold to

pass most bills in the 53-47 Senate. And Democrats are uniformly opposed to the bill.

"I think people at some point have to come to grips with that," Thune said.

Mamdani's success in New York tests Democratic Party's willingness to change

By STEVE PEOPLES, ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and MATT BROWN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani stepped into the national spotlight this week as an ascendant political force within the Democratic Party.

Democratic leaders aren't so sure that's a good thing.

As progressives cheered across the nation, some of the most powerful Democrats in the country, including House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, downplayed the impact of Mamdani's victories on Tuesday, when the 34-year-old democratic socialist mayor's slate of congressional candidates defeated three establishment favorites — including two incumbents — in primary contests. He had even more victories in state legislative races, where he successfully backed five other candidates.

It was a stunning sweep for Mamdani, just six months into his first term, that will expand his influence in Washington and Albany. The mayor said Wednesday that he hopes to export his policies and politics to other states, while demanding major changes across the Democratic Party.

"Working people are struggling across the country," Mamdani said. He added that he hopes to help "write a new chapter in our party's history, where working people are back at the heart of that struggle. And I believe that will be key in not just the midterms coming up in November, but also in the years to come."

The mixed reaction from Democratic leaders as they grappled with the fallout from Mamdani's success exposed the depth of the divide between the party's progressive and establishment wings, who are at odds over how Democrats should govern — and how to win elections — over the final two years of the Donald Trump presidency.

Indeed, Democrats hope to avoid an all-out intraparty civil war ahead of the November midterms, especially with Republicans fighting amongst themselves over Trump's war in Iran, how to address the affordability crunch and the president's costly efforts to build a massive White House ballroom.

Democrats aren't sure which direction to take

The Mamdani resistance from senior Democrats was not subtle.

"The effort to nationalize New York is going to fail," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut. "What's happening in New York will be really irrelevant by the time of the elections in November."

Rep. Marc Veasey of Texas, a vice chair of the New Democrat Coalition, was similarly dismissive, saying progressives were playing checkers while moderates were playing chess.

"No one in DSA is trying to win in a red-to-blue seat, or in a tough general election matchup," Veasey said, referring to democratic socialist candidates.

Democrats' left flank said the party's latest nominees should be welcomed with open arms.

"What I would like to see, and what I think would be actually productive and beneficial, is a congratulations to these people, a commitment to welcome them in, to understanding the perspectives that they bring," said Rep. Summer Lee, a 38-year-old progressive from Pennsylvania.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent from Vermont who campaigned alongside Mamdani and his allies last week, said New York's results sent a clear message.

"The American people, in New York and increasingly all over the country, are sick and tired of status quo establishment politics," he said. "I think you're gonna continue to see it."

Trump saw an opportunity to stir the pot from the Oval Office, telling reporters that the Democrats were "going radical left" and Mamdani's choices are "really communist."

He marveled at the defeat of Rep. Dan Goldman, a former top lawyer during Democrats' first impeachment of Trump. Goldman was defeated by Brad Lander, an ally of Mamdani.

"When they go more liberal than Dan Goldman, they're really into Never Neverland," he said.

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'Voters are just pissed off'

Mamdani backed three anti-establishment congressional challengers in a political gamble that his own team acknowledged was risky. He won them all.

Goldman, a two-term incumbent, was swiftly defeated by Lander, a former city comptroller.

U.S. Rep. Adriano Espaillat, who leads the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, was toppled by Mamdani's most polarizing pick, Darializa Avila Chevalier, a democratic socialist who once helped organize pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University.

Antonio Reynoso, the handpicked successor of U.S. Rep. Nydia Velazquez, lost to another democratic socialist, Assembly Member Claire Valdez.

The entire Mamdani slate promised to "abolish ICE," condemned Israel's "genocide" in Gaza and vowed to "tax the rich."

"Voters are just pissed off," Lander said in an interview. "They want people who show who they're fighting for, and really get out and fight for things that matter in the lives of working people."

Cheering the extent of Mamdani's success, progressive leaders called on the Democratic Party's leadership in Washington — and its next crop of presidential candidates — to adopt meaningful changes in the weeks and months ahead.

Indeed, Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, a potential presidential candidate, said it would be "silly" for his party not to draw meaningful conclusions from New York's results.

"The voters are clearly telling us they want us to be bolder — bolder in the policies we're proposing and bolder in the tactics we use to fight authoritarians," he said.

And yet the Mamdani critics within the party were not hard to find.

Jeffries, who is in line to become the next House speaker if Democrats win the House majority this fall, reiterated his opposition to Mamdani's slate in repeated interviews and media appearances.

"He's got work to do in terms of the conversations that he's going to have with members of Congress moving forward," Jeffries, the No. 1 House Democrat jabbed, even as he said they have a good working relationship.

Republicans are paying attention

Giddy House Republican operatives vowed to weaponize Mamdani and his slate to undercut the Democratic brand in competitive midterm elections across the country, while other Republican officials warned their party to pay attention to this pivotal moment in the nation's politics.

"Republicans need to wake up. What we saw last night in New York can only be called one thing: a socialist uprising sweeping the Democrat Party," said Sen. Bernie Moreno of Ohio. "If Republicans don't act now, we will lose this country as we know it."

Meanwhile, Trump seemed to worry more about Mamdani's growing national profile than his democratic socialist policies.

"Mayor Mamdani pulled through 3 solid Communists, and has received loud and universal applause from the Fake News Media. Congratulations Mr. Mayor!" the Republican president wrote on social media. "I went 16-0 last night, helping to elect wonderful American Patriots, and the Media doesn't say a word."

Meanwhile, Mamdani dismissed broader concerns that his success would undermine the Democratic Party's fight to win control of Congress this fall.

"We've heard from Republicans time and again that they're going to try and make these candidates the face of the Democratic Party. To them, I say that we are ready for that," he said. "For far too long we have been told that it is not possible to fight for working people and win. These candidates have shown that they can."

And yet some Democrats were clear-eyed about the work that lies ahead to bring the party together as new divisions flared in the wake of Mamdani's success.

"We have to respect the voters. They made their decision," said Sen. Peter Welch of Vermont.

"The challenge that we have," he continued, "is to build the different points of view together, all in service of helping people who are struggling to pay their bills to get more economic security. The challenge

of unity is enormous. But that's our challenge."

Senate Republicans hold new vote on war powers after Trump berated them at Capitol meeting

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, STEVEN SLOAN, JOEY CAPPELLETTI and LISA MASCARO Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans who were berated by President Donald Trump on Wednesday over opposition to his war in Iran held a late-night vote to try to appease him, voting down a war powers resolution a day after a similar measure passed.

Trump harangued GOP senators face to face earlier in the day for allowing a vote to block his war in Iran on Tuesday, further escalating a feud that has diverted GOP efforts to focus on election-year affordability issues and brought much of the chamber's business to a halt. He exchanged particularly harsh words with Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of four Republicans who had voted with Democrats on the measure.

Hours later, though, Cassidy received a personal briefing on the war at the White House from Vice President JD Vance and envoy Steve Witkoff and returned to the Capitol to vote against a separate war powers resolution. Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, a Republican who has repeatedly voted with Democrats to halt the war, voted present this time "to give the President more space and leverage to negotiate a lasting peace," he said on X. The measure failed 47-50-1.

"I want to thank Vice President Vance and Special Envoy Witkoff for the thorough briefing this afternoon on Iran. I appreciate the quick invitation to the White House to address many of my concerns," said Cassidy, who lost reelection last month after Trump endorsed his opponent, in a post on X.

It's unclear whether the move will be enough to appease Trump, who had called the Republicans "losers" for voting against his war and had called Cassidy a "lunatic" at the lunch after their tense exchange. But the vote was a clear signal to the president from Republican senators who still want to placate him, despite increasing tensions in recent weeks and his decision Wednesday morning to reverse himself and delay signing a housing bill that received overwhelming bipartisan support.

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Cassidy had sharp words for Trump

Invited by Florida Sen. Rick Scott to speak at a GOP luncheon in the Capitol, Trump had signaled ahead of time that he would use the closed-door meeting to push senators to pass his proof-of-citizenship voting bill. But the conversation was more focused on Tuesday's vote on war powers, a mostly symbolic measure that allows Congress to rebuke the administration's military actions. The House had passed its own version of the resolution earlier this month.

Most Republicans stayed quiet. But Cassidy, who lost reelection in his primary last month after Trump endorsed an opponent, stood up and defended his vote.

"I stood and said, 'You have not told the American people what's going on,'" Cassidy told reporters after the meeting. "This was supposed to last four weeks, it's lasted four months. Our original objectives have not been achieved."

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"We like everyone in the room," Trump told reporters on his way out. "I don't like a few people, but that's OK."

The luncheon capped weeks of friction between Trump and Senate Republicans and added a new layer

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of frustration as Tuesday's vote was the first time the Senate had adopted a war powers resolution on the Iran war. Trump made clear he was in no mood to compromise before it even started, calling off a scheduled signing ceremony on a housing bill that passed both chambers overwhelmingly this week and that GOP lawmakers were touting as an election-year achievement.

Trump reverses on housing bill

Republican senators were eager for a conciliatory meeting with the president after escalating tensions in recent weeks. But Trump upended their plans when he declared on social media just beforehand that he wouldn't sign the legislation until they send him the SAVE America Act, his bill to require proof of citizenship for all voters.

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said he doesn't know why Trump is holding the housing bill "hostage" for the voting bill that "will never pass in this Congress."

"It makes no sense to me," Tillis said as he walked into the luncheon.

Thune said the housing legislation, which aims to lower costs, is "an affordability issue," and that "eventually I hope he finds a way to sign it."

It's unclear if Trump might veto the legislation or if the late Wednesday night vote will change his outlook. But by rejecting a public bill signing, Republicans worry that Trump is indicating a level of indifference to voters' affordability concerns heading into November's midterm elections.

Trump and Senate Republicans have been at odds

Trump's move on the housing bill is his latest reversal after weeks of being at odds with Senate Republicans.

Trump has blocked the Senate from confirming one of his own nominees, asked them to fund parts of his White House ballroom project despite opposition and forced them to defend the Iran war even as they question the strategy and endgame.

Trump has also helped whittle down his own support in the Senate after endorsing primary challengers to two GOP incumbents who were previously reliable votes for his agenda — Cassidy and Texas Sen. John Cornyn. Both men have become more critical of Trump since losing reelection.

"If we're going to win the midterm elections, we need to get on the same page," Cornyn said ahead of the meeting. "We're not on the same page now, and that I think is dangerous."

Trump pushes Thune on SAVE America Act

Trump has pressed Republicans for months to kill the Senate filibuster and focus on the proof-of-citizenship voting bill, even though Thune has repeatedly told him that neither has the votes.

While Thune remains popular in his conference and cordial with the president, he has spent much of his time lately telling Trump what he doesn't want to hear. Thune said Tuesday that while Trump and some in their conference want to see the voting bill pass, "it's just not realistic."

Thune devoted weeks of floor time to the voting bill earlier this year and has said he supports it. But he has repeatedly said there aren't enough votes to scrap the filibuster that triggers a 60-vote threshold to pass most bills in the 53-47 Senate. And Democrats are uniformly opposed to the bill.

"I think people at some point have to come to grips with that," Thune said.

In France's historic heat wave, Paris' dreamy rooftops become a heat-trapping nightmare

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Before the heat struck, Amelie Kenney could boast that she almost had it all: a tiny but cheap top-floor apartment in Paris, with an enviable view from its minuscule balcony of the French capital's iconic gray roofs and even, when she leans out far enough, up to the Sacré-Cœur basilica atop Montmartre.

But with a historic heat wave making attic apartments like hers potentially hazardous for health, the 23-year-old recent graduate isn't feeling quite so fortunate.

"It's been the worst week that we've had in this apartment," she said this week as the capital and other parts of Europe roasted. "It's just baking in the whole afternoon and it's impossible to just get a respite."

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Many of Paris' buildings that look so picturesque from the outside are proving to be hostile, even dangerous for health, during the unrelenting record heat that is turning both the long summer days and short sweaty nights into battles.

That's particularly true for those living directly under the roofs of Paris — who often cannot afford larger, lower-floor apartments less impacted by direct sun.

Extreme heat can make them deadly. A study of a record-breaking 2003 heat wave blamed for 15,000 heat-related deaths found that living in a Paris attic room directly under the roof increased the risk of death by more than fourfold, France's public health agency said in a report last year.

And researchers who studied heat-related deaths in European cities for a study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal in 2023 found that Paris had the highest risks of heat-related deaths out of 30 European capitals they looked at.

About three-quarters of Paris rooftops use sheets of zinc as covering, producing the city's magnificent gray vistas that have long inspired artists and filmmakers. The tradecraft of its zinc roofers is recognized as a valued cultural heritage for humanity by the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO. Zinc is weather-resistant, malleable and can be recycled. But as a metal, it also absorbs and conducts heat.

"People find the rooftops of Paris charming. There's the image of the attic room. But in reality, when you look at who lives in these apartments, it's often students paying a great deal of money for a small room," said Maider Olivier, with The Foundation for Housing for the Disadvantaged campaign group.

"Not only are they extremely exposed to heat, but it's also impossible to create cross-ventilation to get rid of the heat at night."

In the sixth-floor walk-up that Kenney shares with her partner, Francesca Pilia, also 23, they've squeezed a desk, a double bed and a small electric piano. The apartment's one window, protruding from the zinc roof, faces west, putting it in direct sun from midday to dusk. They split the rent of 735 euros (\$835) a month.

"It was the cheapest place to be," Kenney said. "I like that it looks out onto the square. I can see marriages almost every Saturday morning."

"But now I think if I could spend extra money to be somewhere else, I would."

Although office blocks, shopping centers, cinemas and other modern places where people congregate often have air conditioning, private apartments rarely do, especially in densely populated central Paris with its classic Haussmann-style buildings — named after the 19th century urban planner who transformed the city, giving it wide, tree-lined avenues and much of its architectural look.

Olivier, the housing campaigner, said that zoning regulations intended to preserve Paris' character, including its signature rooftops, hinder efforts to adapt housing to extreme heat.

"There are people who are unable to insulate their roofs or install shutters to block the sun and prevent their homes from overheating because of regulations to protect the rooftops," she said. "But these regulations which protect the rooftops of Paris do not protect the people who live beneath those rooftops."

Kenney, from Australia, and Pilia, who's Italian, are no strangers to heat. But the temperatures in Paris — with record highs for June nudging past 40 C (104 F) during the day and 25 C (77 F) at night — have been grueling.

They've invested in a small electric fan, take cold showers, sponge themselves down with a wet rag, hydrate, and battle with the dilemma of whether to keep their window open.

"I'll wake up and I'll decide, it's too hot, I have to open the window," Kenney said. "An hour later, I wake up, I say, 'It is too loud, I have to close the window.'"

"It's a very, very Kafkaesque cycle."

Americans are inundated with suspected scams. New polling shows why few victims report them

By AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans are inundated with scam attempts on a daily basis — and about 3 in 10 have personally lost money or personal information to scams, according to a new AP-NORC survey.

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The poll, conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in February, highlights the obstacle course that U.S. adults navigate daily as they screen calls, ignore messages or try to puzzle out if that urgent request from their cellphone provider is legitimate.

A separate survey conducted by Gallup and the Stop Scams Alliance that was provided exclusively to the AP found that last year alone, about 1 in 10 U.S. adults said they or someone else from their household was deceived by a scammer into losing money or providing access to a financial account, with nearly half saying they lost more than \$500.

That leaves many Americans feeling like they're constantly at risk of falling for a scam, often without a sense of recourse. In both surveys, few victims said they reported the scam to the federal government or local law enforcement. Many victims didn't report the scam, Gallup found, because they didn't think it would make a difference in getting money back.

"You've got to be pretty sophisticated these days," said Adam Pratter, 42. He has run into problems on dating apps — and once ended up sending money to a person who claimed they were overseas because of a military deployment and needed money to buy food. He realized it was a scam when the requests didn't stop.

Pratter thinks banks and social media companies have a responsibility to help people who have been scammed, but also believes the government needs to do more.

"If federal regulation wanted to step in and make deals with these companies to get these people their money back, they could," he said.

For many Americans, scam attempts are constant

Americans are flooded with scam attempts, according to both surveys. More than half, 58%, of U.S. adults in the AP-NORC poll said they receive daily text messages, phone calls, emails, online messages or online advertisements that they suspect are scams, while the Gallup survey found last year that about 4 in 10 experienced attempted scams on a daily basis.

Porschel Smith, 22, gets multiple scam calls every day, and receives even more scam emails. Some of the scams are easy for her to identify. "They mention different types of programs that I know are non-existent," she said.

But sometimes she ends up engaging with the scammer before realizing that something is wrong. "Some of them hack your account and pretend as if they're someone that you know," she said. "But then I get to asking questions and realize they're scams."

Older people are more likely to say they receive scam attempts daily, according to the AP-NORC poll. About 7 in 10 U.S. adults ages 60 and older say they are contacted by a suspected scammer at least once a day, compared to about 4 in 10 Americans under 30.

Among those who have received suspected scam attempts, the AP-NORC poll found that outreach involving package shipments or banking were among the most common methods. About 4 in 10 people who were contacted by scammers say at least one of the attempts they received over the past few years were through Facebook or Facebook Messenger, while about 2 in 10 said they were on WhatsApp, and a similar share said they were on Instagram.

Around 30% of US adults say they've been scammed personally

The impact of scams is far-reaching. About half, 51%, of U.S. adults know someone personally — such as a friend or family member — who has ever lost money as the result of a scam, the AP-NORC poll found, while about 3 in 10 U.S. adults say they have personally been scammed into giving away money or personal information.

The Gallup survey found that about 1 in 10 U.S. adults said they or a member of their household was scammed out of money in 2025, with 6% saying they had been personally scammed.

About half of people whose household experienced scams last year reported losing between \$125 and \$2,000, according to Gallup.

About 1 in 10 U.S. adults have been scammed multiple times, Gallup found.

"It's not easy. They know what they're doing," said Towonna Harris, 50. Her son was once contacted by scammers who promised to give him money for tuition if he authorized a nominal credit card charge,

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which quickly spiraled into a much bigger set of charges.

She's experienced other kinds of scams on a smaller scale, too. "I ordered some stuff. I never got it," she said. "I thought it was a legitimate company. And then I saw all these reviews saying it was a scam."

Few scam victims report to law enforcement

Virtually all U.S. adults believe that scams pose a "major" or "minor" threat to individuals in the U.S., but few think the government is doing enough to solve the problem. About 8 in 10 Americans say the government is "definitely" or "probably" doing too little to prevent scams, according to the Gallup survey, including large majorities of Republicans and Democrats.

When people are scammed, both surveys found that victims are much likelier to reach out to financial institutions than the federal government or local law enforcement. About half, 55%, of people who were scammed last year reported to a bank, credit union or other financial institution, the Gallup poll found, but only 18% contacted state or local law enforcement, while 13% reported to either federal law enforcement or the Federal Trade Commission.

Many victims don't make a report because they don't think it will help, or don't know where to go, Gallup found. Among people who were scammed in 2025, 75% said they didn't report because they thought it wouldn't make a difference in getting their money back, while 58% were uncertain where to report.

More broadly, Americans express very low confidence that they'd know how to report a scam to the government if they needed to. According to the AP-NORC poll, most Americans, 55%, say they are "extremely" or "very" confident that if they were scammed, they'd know how to report it to banks or credit card companies, but only about one-quarter are similarly confident that they'd know how to report to federal or state law enforcement.

Only about one-third of U.S. adults said they would know where to make a report if they lost \$5,000 in a scam today, Gallup found.

Max Anderson, 23, said that his parents are small business owners who were the victims of a costly and complex scam. "A scammer successfully imitated one of their employees and changed their direct deposit information. This went on for about 3 months. It went to \$15,000," he said.

Eventually, Anderson's father got help from the FBI, he said.

"I do like that the government stepped in with my parents, and I feel like that's the way it should be," he said. "It's a big enough problem at this point that it falls to the government and companies to do something about it."

Back-to-back powerful earthquakes hit Venezuela, causing widespread damage

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and JUAN PABLO ARRAEZ Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Powerful back-to-back earthquakes struck Venezuela on Wednesday evening, causing widespread damage, collapsing buildings and sending panicked residents into the streets.

The 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes roiled the region, with buildings evacuated in cities as far away as Brazil's Amazon, about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Caracas.

In a brief address to the nation late Wednesday, acting President Delcy Rodríguez said the earthquakes caused damages in several states, but she did not give any figures on the number of homes and buildings affected, or on injuries or fatalities.

The earthquakes damaged the country's main airport, Simón Bolívar International Airport, severely enough to lead to its closure, she said, adding that classes were being canceled for several days.

"We urge our population to remain calm," Rodríguez said. "We urge unity."

Rodríguez also asked all health care professionals in the country to report to hospitals to assist anyone who was injured. The Ministry of Education late Wednesday said some schools would be used as shelters and donation centers.

In the coastal state of Falcon, Gov. Víctor Clark said 32 people had been hospitalized and more than four hours after the earthquake there were still 15 people trapped.

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The U.S. Geological Survey initially said the first earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1, later revising that to 7.2. Its epicenter was west of the community of Morón, located along the country's Caribbean coast, about 168 kilometers (104 miles) west of Caracas. The quake had a depth of 22 kilometers (13.6 miles).

The USGS reported an even larger 7.5-magnitude earthquake just a minute later. The second quake had a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) and its epicenter was 16 kilometers (10 miles) southwest of Morón.

The quakes, among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century, struck shortly after 6 p.m. People evacuated swaying buildings in the capital Caracas, many visibly shocked as they saw entire walls that had collapsed, making furniture visible from the street. Dust columns could also be seen in two neighborhoods of the capital, where restaurants and other businesses are typically busy.

'We all had to leave our houses'

People remained on the streets for hours, even after sunset. Some sat on the ground hugging their pets as dust gathered around them. Collapsed buildings, toppled electric poles and debris blocked streets. Parts of the capital lost power and cellphone signal.

"It started off gently and then gradually grew, and in the end, we all had to leave our houses, go outside and gather together," Caracas resident Hector Ricci said.

Rodríguez, who declared a state of emergency, said subway and natural gas services in Caracas were canceled. She also urged Venezuelans to report any damages through a government app.

The lack of cellphone signal in parts of Venezuela deepened the distress of many families, particularly those among the more than 7.7 million people who have left the country during its protracted crisis.

Venezuela opposition leader María Corina Machado, in exile after leaving Venezuela in December, took to X to send prayers and wish strength to Venezuelans.

"May strength, serenity, and solidarity prevail among us in the face of this difficult time," she said on X.

Impact felt throughout Venezuela

Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said the quake could be felt in several states. The Altamira neighborhood in Caracas had "alarming situations" with collapsed homes and buildings, he said, suggesting people were injured in the earthquake and asking motorists to give way to ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

"We understand that some people may be desperate, but we are acting according to protocols to activate aid and rescue efforts to help those who need it most," Cabello said on state television. "Be very careful with children and the elderly; call each other and check that no one has been harmed."

He also urged people to remain outside as aftershocks could further damage some structures.

"The building really shook from side to side. Unreal. The force was incredibly strong," Caracas resident Roberto Gamas said. "We were walking and it was tossing us around. Everything in the apartment fell. Well, thank God we were able to get out."

Expressions of support posted on social media

Reaction poured in swiftly on social media, with offers of help from various governments including the United States, Chile and El Salvador.

"The US stands with the Venezuelan people in the aftermath of this evening's devastating earthquakes," U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau said on X. "We're in touch with the authorities and mobilizing assistance."

El Salvador President Nayib Bukele, once diametrically opposed to Venezuela's government, said he had offered aid Wednesday night on a post on X.

"We send you all our solidarity and our prayers. Stay strong, Venezuela," Bukele wrote.

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa expressed solidarity with the Venezuelan people and said he had ordered the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid to help respond to the emergency.

"Ecuador will respond with the speed and commitment this moment demands because, despite our enormous differences, humanity must always guide the actions of a leader," Noboa wrote.

Earthquake impacts the region

Buildings in Manaus, Belem and Macapá in Brazil's Amazon were evacuated, according to reports on TV Globo.

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The quakes also were felt in Colombia's Caribbean and northeast regions, but there were no reports of damages or injuries.

The U.S. Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued several tsunami alerts in the wake of the earthquakes that were quickly lifted.

Strong earthquakes are unusual in Venezuela.

While Venezuela sits near multiple fault lines, its position straddling the South American and Caribbean plates make earthquakes much less common than in other parts of Latin America.

Along the Pacific coast — in Mexico and Chile, for example — earthquakes are frequent. Those two countries sit along the seismically active tectonic belt known as the Ring of Fire, which is responsible for 90% of earthquakes, according to the USGS.

NBA draft finishes up in New York, where some second-round picks are revered

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Some of New York's biggest basketball heroes were second-round draft picks.

Like Jalen Brunson, the guy marching through Manhattan with the Larry O'Brien Trophy in his arms last week during a joyous championship parade celebration. And Willis Reed, the guy who limped onto the floor before and during the early minutes of Game 7 of the 1970 NBA Finals to lift the Knicks to their first championship.

So when the NBA draft resumed on Wednesday night in Brooklyn with the Knicks on the clock with the No. 31 pick, every team had hope of finding someone who can be a key piece of a title team.

They drafted Ohio State guard Bruce Thornton, but had already agreed to trade the rights to the pick to Houston by the time NBA deputy commissioner Mark Tatum announced the selection.

Thornton was given a Knicks hat when his name was announced. He was wearing a Rockets one by the time he arrived for his interviews and said he was just happy to get to the NBA, even if it was in Texas and not with the new champions.

"Somebody said I got the wrong hat. I'm like, 'What do you mean?'" Thornton said. "Then I heard it's the Houston Rockets. I'm like, no state tax, so that's even better."

The first round, which began with Washington selecting AJ Dybantsa, finished late Tuesday night.

The end of it and the second round has become a process of wheeling and dealing, with teams like the Knicks, who traded back from the No. 24 spot and eventually out of the first round entirely, sometimes moving multiple times. That was part of the reason teams wanted to stop doing the entire draft in one night and break it into two, given them more time for evaluation.

That makes things hard for players such as Duke's Isaiah Evans, who was in the green room at Barclays Center on Tuesday but wasn't selected. He didn't return Wednesday to hear his name called with the No. 33 pick that is owned by Minnesota after a trade with Brooklyn.

It's not as bad for players who weren't expecting to be selected on the first night or understood patience, something Meleek Thomas said he learned playing for John Calipari at Arkansas.

"The most important lesson I learned from Coach Cal this year was: Your time is coming. Don't worry about when. Don't worry about how," said Thomas, who was selected by Sacramento with the No. 34 pick and dealt to Cleveland.

In a much different NBA with a different draft format, Reed was the No. 8 pick in the 1964 draft, which made him the first pick of the second round. The Hall of Famer went on to lead the Knicks to championships in 1970 and 1973 and was the NBA Finals MVP both times.

Brunson was the No. 33 pick in the 2018 draft, taken early in the second round by the Dallas Mavericks. The Knicks signed him as a free agent in 2022 and the franchise has been on the rise ever since, culminating with their five-game victory over the San Antonio Spurs earlier this month when Brunson was MVP of the series.

German guard Jack Kayil, whose rights were acquired by the Knicks with the No. 39 pick, not surprisingly

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named Brunson as the player he was hoping to learn from.

"We play kind of in a similar position," Kayil said. "We are also in kind of the same position of the draft. He was also second round. So I think I can learn a lot of stuff, how he started getting into the NBA, into the league, getting in touch with that."

The Knicks also acquired the rights to Tyler Nickel, the No. 47 pick from Vanderbilt, with their moves.

Among the other well-known names taken in the second round Wednesday were Richie Saunders, Dybantsa's BYU teammate who was selected at No. 32 by Memphis; Purdue's Braden Smith, the NCAA's career assists leader who was taken at No. 38 with a pick belonging to Indiana; Kentucky's Otega Oweh, with the No. 41 pick acquired by Oklahoma City; and Emanuel Sharp from Houston at No. 45 to Sacramento.

The Wizards also had the 60th and final selection of the draft but dealt it to Milwaukee. The Bucks took Malique Lewis, a forward from Trinidad and Tobago who was playing most recently in Australia.

Trump turns America 250 kickoff into a campaign-style rally on the National Mall

By COLLIN BINKLEY, THOMAS BEAUMONT and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump formally kicked off celebrations for America's 250th anniversary on Wednesday night by working to get the country excited again — about himself.

The president hosted a rally on Washington's National Mall, including a series of booming flyovers by stealth bombers, music from military bands, and Lee Greenwood singing "God Bless the USA."

"There has never been anything like the United States of America, and together we are making it bigger and better and stronger and far more exceptional than ever before," Trump said.

He said he'd restored the country to greatness, proclaiming, "Nobody's laughing at us anymore."

As he does in all rally speeches, Trump championed his crackdown on the U.S.-Mexico border and opposition to transgender rights. However, perhaps in a nod to the anniversary celebrations, he was far less critical of Democrats than usual — at least to a point.

"The American Dream is alive again. It's something that nobody thought they'd be saying when you went through that last four years of incompetence," Trump said.

The president also mentioned his tumultuous effort to revamp the Reflecting Pool near the Lincoln Memorial and build a ballroom at the White House.

Surprisingly, Trump wrapped his speech in less than half an hour — making it one of the shortest rally addresses of his second term and perhaps his entire political career. Just Tuesday, while addressing workers at a truck factory in Pennsylvania, Trump spoke for well over an hour.

Still, he found time to note that he'll again be addressing a Washington rally on July Fourth, imploring, "Your favorite president will be speaking so please show up."

For Wednesday's speech, the crowd was contained to a segment of the National Mall that was nearly full. From the stage, Trump could likely see the neon colors of the giant Ferris wheel erected in front of the Capitol.

Rally comes as midterms begin looming

Trump is working to convince Americans ahead of critical November elections that he's put the unpopular Iran war in the rearview mirror, with oil prices easing as the Strait of Hormuz has started to reopen in the wake of an interim deal to end the war with Tehran.

The rally launched weeks of celebrations about America and its 1776 founding as part of "The Great American State Fair" on the mall, the national park that stretches from the U.S. Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial.

But Trump's appearance was only announced after several musicians — including Young MC, Martina McBride and the Commodores — canceled their concerts because of concerns the event had become politicized.

Instead, among those addressing the crowd was Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, who slammed the musicians who backed out while declaring that Trump is "the greatest president that's ever existed in

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this country since George Washington.”

The president himself told the crowd, “This is the beginning of the golden age of America.” He congratulated himself for ousting Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro — but made no mention of the earthquakes that rocked that country Wednesday night.

Organizers distributed rectangular cardboard American flags that some attendees used for shade before the sun went down and Trump took the stage.

On the menu for the crowd: burgers, sausages and turkey legs. The program felt like a summer concert, except for the variety of American flag-themed outfits, from overalls to skirts to hats. There were also plenty of “Make America Great Again” hats.

Attendees included Karen and Brian Ontrap, who drove 500-plus miles from northwest Ohio with their children. They planned the trip in January to celebrate the nation’s 250th anniversary and, for some in the group, see Washington for the first time.

Karen Ontrap said the pair support the president “100%.”

Trump is pressing the case that he’s made America better

The president has struggled to deliver the presidency that he advertised to voters — causing his approval rating to dwindle at a low 37%, according to the most recent Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research polling.

Democrats say his botched repairs to the reflecting pool and the resulting algae outbreak are a sign that he’s spending taxpayer money on vanity projects instead of the nation’s legacy.

Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif., said the Trump-affiliated group organizing the 250th anniversary was selling access to special interests and redrafting the nation’s founding to the president’s liking, based on documents he presented at a congressional hearing earlier this year.

“It should be about bringing us together,” Huffman said. “He’s trying to make this 250th celebration all about him.”

Only 33% of U.S. adults approve of Trump’s economic leadership, with favorability at 40% on immigration and 34% on Iran.

Trump’s rallies can only help so much without improvements on inflation

Inflation is still higher than what Trump inherited and it has been outpacing wage growth. The budget deficit remains on a path upward that keeps interest rates high. Investments in artificial intelligence are driving growth, but they come with fears of middle-class job losses such that the construction of data centers needed for America’s tech economy have become controversial politically.

Still, for many, Trump was the main attraction.

Jacob Wankasky and his family, traveling from Buffalo, New York, peeled off a day early from their trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania, when he and his wife, Jennifer, realized they could see Trump before their planned visit Thursday to the State Fair with their children, ages 4 and 6.

“It’s a once in a lifetime chance,” Jacob Wankasky said. In a bright red “America Is Back” cap, the 42-year-old antique mall owner said Trump’s return to the White House was a relief in a time of “insanity.”

World Cup what to know: US faces decisions for final group-stage game against winless Turkey

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

The United States returns to the pitch for its final World Cup group-stage game with some decisions to make.

The Americans have already won Group D to lock up a spot in the knockout stage and will face winless Turkey in Inglewood, California, on Thursday.

Christian Pulisic returned to training after missing a 2-0 win over Australia, but coach Mauricio Pochettino has to decide how much to use his star player in a game that’s meaningless in the standings and the knockout stage right around the corner.

There are similar decisions to make with Tyler Adams, Folarin Balogun, Chris Richards and Antonee

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Robinson. They're all on yellow cards and would miss the first knockout round game if they picked up a second against Turkey.

The U.S. has won consecutive World Cup matches for the first time since 1930. Its six goals in the first two matches are one short of the team record for a World Cup.

Turkey has yet to score a goal in its first World Cup in 24 years and is already eliminated.

Thursday will be the second day with six matches, including Germany looking to win its third straight game, Ivory Coast aiming to make the knockout stage for the first time and Ecuador needing a win to escape the group stage.

What to watch on June 25

- Curacao vs. Ivory Coast , 4 p.m. EDT in Philadelphia (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Ecuador vs. Germany, 4 p.m. EDT in East Rutherford, New Jersey (Fox/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Japan vs. Sweden, 7 p.m. EDT in Arlington, Texas (Fox/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Tunisia vs. The Netherlands, 7 p.m. EDT in Kansas City, Missouri (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Paraguay vs. Australia, 10 p.m. EDT in Santa Clara, California (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Turkey vs. United States, 10 p.m. EDT in Inglewood, California (Fox/Telemundo/Peacock)

Ecuador faces must-win against Germany

Ecuador arrived at the World Cup on a 19-game winning streak.

It could face an early exit if it can't find a way to beat Germany in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Ecuador opened the World Cup with a 1-0 loss to Ivory Coast on Amad Diallo's goal in the 90th minute and played to a scoreless draw against Curacao, the smallest nation in the World Cup.

That leaves Ecuador trailing both Germany and Ivory Coast in Group E with one point and needing to beat the Germans, who have already clinched the group but will be without defender Nico Schlotterbeck for the rest of the World Cup because of an ankle injury.

Ivory Coast on the cusp of knockout stage

Ivory Coast has a chance to make history in its fourth World Cup.

With a win already under their belt, the Elephants can clinch a spot in the knockout round for the first time with a win over Curacao in Philadelphia.

Ivory Coast pulled off a 1-0 win over Ecuador and had a halftime lead over Germany before losing 2-1. Ivory Coast's previous best chance to reach the knockout stage came in Brazil in 2014 when it opened with a win over Japan before losing the next two games.

Curacao still has an outside shot of reaching the knockout round, needing a win and some goal-differential help from Ecuador. Curacao has a goal differential of minus-6, thanks to an opening 7-1 loss to Germany.

Group F winner still up in the air

The Netherlands and Japan will be playing for the top spot in Group F on Thursday night — the Dutch play Tunisia, the Japanese face Sweden — but both teams have said they want no updates on each other as their games are progressing.

"You have to focus on making sure you win the match," said Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman, whose team has a record World Cup unbeaten streak of 14 matches, excluding penalty shootouts. "We would love to be first in the group and of course the result will have an impact on that, but that's not the most important thing. Playing this game is the most important thing."

The Netherlands and Japan both have four points and a plus-four goal differential. Sweden is at three points with its 5-1 loss to Dutch.

To finish first in the group, Sweden has to win and have the Netherlands do no better than a draw.

"It's literally my first rodeo in terms of a World Cup so it's going to be new to me," Sweden coach Graham Potter said. "But yeah, it's best for us to try to get the positive results and focus on that."

Paraguay, Australia play for second in Group D

There's plenty at stake in the final Group D match between Australia and Paraguay.

The Australians will clinch second place in the group and a spot in the knockout round with either a win or draw. Paraguay clinches second place with a win and is almost assured advancement as a third-place

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team with a draw. The situation will be more tenuous with a loss for either team, with goal differential likely deciding the fate.

The game is a bit of a full-circle moment for Socceroos coach Tony Popovic, who played his final international game as a player against Paraguay in a friendly 20 years ago when he scored his eighth international goal.

"I didn't score many so I have to remind you of that," Popovic said. "It was a special way to end my international career. To think that all these years later I'll be the head coach and we're up against Paraguay is special. That was a great day and hopefully tomorrow will be a special day for Australia against Paraguay once more."

Australia will be without defender Jacob Italiano and forward Mat Leckie, who are dealing with injuries. Paraguay will be without midfielder Miguel Almiron, who is suspended after getting a red card for covering his mouth during a confrontation against Turkey. Mauricio will start in his place, coach Gustavo Alfaro said.

More World Cup news

- Switzerland wraps up first place in Group B at the World Cup with a 2-1 victory over Canada
- Bosnia-Herzegovina boosts chances of advancing at World Cup with 3-1 win over Qatar
- Vinícius Júnior scores 2 goals as Brazil beats Scotland 3-0 to win its World Cup group
- Soufiane Rahimi and Gessime Yassine help Morocco rally to beat Haiti 4-2 at the World Cup
- Qatar's Assim Madibo banned for 5 games after breaking the leg of Canada's Ismaël Koné at World Cup
- 'Our idol is back': Neymar debuts in this World Cup as a sub for Brazil against Scotland
- Turkey coach Montella says he won't resign after winless World Cup start, admonishes heckling fans
- Ivory Coast eyes knockout stage of World Cup with striker Elye Wahi expected back amid investigation
- Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha seeks new club after World Cup stardom, doesn't rule out Brazil move
- Day 14 of the World Cup, in photos

Stats of the day

Switzerland has qualified for the knockout phase for the seventh consecutive time in major tournament football (World Cups and UEFA Euros).

Lawmakers demand answers as turmoil over Reflecting Pool repair continues

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional Democrats called for investigations Wednesday into renovations at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, as the ongoing drama over the president's problem-plagued, \$16 million rehabilitation project continued to roil the capital.

Lawmakers in the House and Senate demanded answers about the saga that's been highlighted in the news cycle for weeks, even as the White House has repeatedly blamed — without evidence — unidentified vandals for peeling paint and other problems. Six people have been arrested, President Donald Trump said, without providing details, and a local wildlife nonprofit conducted necropsies on dead ducks found near the Reflecting Pool. The president has said the pool may need to be drained once again for additional repairs.

Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, the top Democrat on the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, challenged the Trump administration over no-bid contracts for work on the Reflecting Pool, saying they were awarded to vendors with previous relationships to Trump.

National Park Service projects undertaken at Trump's behest in the Washington area "have been marked by blatant corruption, a shocking lack of transparency, disregard for legal requirements and apparent incompetence," Blumenthal wrote Wednesday in a letter to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and Jessica Bowron, the acting Park Service director.

"Rushed no-bid contracts given to unqualified vendors with previous relationships to the president resulted in a reflecting pool more covered with algae than before, with freshly painted chunks of paint peeling from the bottom to float on the pool's surface," Blumenthal said.

The nation's capital "will now celebrate America's 250th birthday with an empty reflecting pool, a testa-

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ment to incompetence and corruption," he added.

Two contracts for Reflecting Pool repairs

Ohio-based Green Water Solutions was given a \$1.7 million contract to install a water-purification system in the Reflecting Pool, while Virginia-based Atlantic Industrial Coatings was awarded \$14.7 million to repaint and waterproof the pool's concrete floor.

Both contractors have ties to Trump entities, said California Rep. Robert Garcia, the top Democrat on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

"Donald Trump's disastrous renovation of our national reflecting pool is his latest failed vanity project," Garcia said, calling the projects a waste of taxpayer money.

Trump pledged to beautify the century-old Reflecting Pool ahead of the nation's 250th birthday celebrations, draining its water and directing the bottom to be painted a color he dubbed "American flag blue." But since the site was restored, its water has been plagued by an algae bloom and pieces of the new coating have appeared to be peeling off the bottom.

Without evidence, Trump has repeatedly blamed the peeling paint on vandalism, including a "350-foot gash" in the liner, as the administration faces a self-imposed deadline to complete the renovation before July 4th. Trump also has said the federal government would release images to substantiate his claim.

Trump said Wednesday that "sick people" had used razors and box cutters to slice portions of the lining. He wasn't sure if the pool draining would come before or after the July 4 holiday, during which tens of thousands of people will be at the National Mall.

The U.S. Park Police posted surveillance footage Wednesday evening and asked for help "identifying the individual depicted here in connection with a Destruction of Government Property investigation." The grainy, 30-second video appears to show a person kneeling down, reaching into the reflecting pool and removing something from the water. Police said it was taken Friday afternoon.

A White House spokeswoman it's "a shame that Democrats do not think the capital of the greatest nation in the history of the world deserves to be safe and beautiful."

Trump "generously spearheaded the restoration of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, which has long been plagued with algae and leaked 16 million gallons of water per year. The president's efforts to beautify our nation's capital are supported by Americans across the country and should be praised by both Republicans and Democrats," spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said.

A spokeswoman for Green Water Solutions, also known as Greenwater Services, said Wednesday the company uses devices called nanobubblers to infuse ozone into the water to kill algae and bacteria. The process is "functioning perfectly" and the water looked clear and blue Wednesday, after rain muddled it Tuesday, spokeswoman Erin Kramer said.

"The water is clear. What is visible is the sediment on the pool floor, a natural part of the remediation process when the algae dies," she said. In a lake or river, that sediment is absorbed, but in a pool it needs to be vacuumed, she said.

The company is owned by John Cafaro, a Trump donor who lives near Mar-a-Lago, the president's private club in Florida.

Atlantic Industrial Coatings, which spread blue sealant across the pool's concrete floor, is owned by Curtis "Eddie" Wood. The company said this week it has identified some areas in the Reflecting Pool that require repairs, adding that the work will be done once the pool is drained. It was unclear when that will happen.

What's next for Reflecting Pool remains murky

Amid the calls for investigations, Democratic Sen. John Hickenlooper of Colorado called for Trump to personally reimburse American taxpayers for the pool renovations, which he called "a national embarrassment."

Americans expect their tax dollars "to fix roads, support schools and protect our public lands," Hickenlooper wrote in a letter to Trump. "They do not expect to bankroll failed presidential vanity projects. The bill for this fiasco should only belong to you, Mr. President."

Federal judge bars Trump from implementing proof of citizenship requirement to vote

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

A federal judge on Wednesday permanently barred President Donald Trump's administration from implementing most of his first executive order on elections, part of which sought to require people to show documentary proof of citizenship when they register to vote.

The ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Denise Casper in Boston effectively converts a preliminary injunction she issued a year ago, in which she temporarily blocked many of Trump's efforts to overhaul elections, into a permanent ban.

Casper rejected the Republican administration's argument that the lawsuit to block the changes brought by Democratic state attorneys general was premature because the rules had yet to be put in place. Instead, she agreed that the Constitution gives states and Congress the authority to regulate elections, and that Trump's requirements violated the separation of powers.

The Constitution "does not grant the President any specific powers over elections," wrote Casper, who was nominated by former Democratic President Barack Obama.

Among other proposed changes, Trump's order would have required people to provide documentary proof of citizenship when registering to vote, prevented mail ballots from being counted if they arrive after Election Day, even if they were postmarked by then, and punished states that failed to comply by withholding certain federal grants, including those intended to beef up election security.

Democrats see order as a constitutional overstep

In a statement, New York Attorney General Letitia James said she was grateful the court had blocked Trump's "unconstitutional attempt to seize control of our elections" and would continue to defend voting rights in this year's midterm elections.

"Generations of Americans fought tirelessly for the right to vote, and we honor their legacy by protecting that right against anyone who tries to undermine it," said James, a Democrat.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta, whose state was the lead plaintiff in the case, said the ruling reaffirmed the constitutional principle that it's up to the states and Congress to set election rules.

"While we are proud of this result, we are clear-eyed that President Trump's attacks on voting rights and our elections show no signs of slowing down," Bonta, a Democrat, said in a statement. "So let me be clear: we will keep fighting back every step of the way."

In a statement, a White House spokeswoman said the Republican president wants to ensure that Americans are confident in the way elections are administered. The administration can appeal Wednesday's ruling if it chooses.

"The President's executive order lawfully protects our elections, and we are confident that we will ultimately prevail in its implementation," spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said.

Trump also is trying to enact voting changes through Congress

The ruling was the latest in a series against the elections executive order Trump signed just months after taking office for his second term. He has since signed another executive order on elections that seeks to create a national voter list and limit mail balloting. That directive also faces multiple legal challenges.

Last fall, a federal judge in Washington, D.C., overseeing a separate challenge to the first election executive order by civil rights and Democratic Party-aligned groups blocked the government from taking steps to include the proof-of-citizenship requirement on the federal voter registration form. That judge later barred Trump's defense secretary from requiring documentary proof of citizenship when military personnel register to vote or request ballots.

In an apparent nod to the difficulty of implementing a proof-of-citizen requirement by executive order, Trump is pushing legislation in the Republican-controlled Congress to create such a mandate. The SAVE America Act has passed the House but has stalled in the Senate, leading Trump to advocate for eliminating the filibuster that is blocking the legislation.

On Wednesday, he abruptly canceled the expected signing of a bipartisan housing bill, saying he would

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not sign legislation until Congress passes his proof of citizenship requirement for voting.

Documents need to prove citizenship not always easy to obtain

Enacting a proof-of-citizenship requirement to vote can be complicated, especially if it's done on the eve of a major election with little time for states or voters to adjust.

A 2025 University of Maryland study estimates that 21.3 million Americans who are eligible to vote do not have — or don't have easy access to — documents to prove their citizenship. That includes nearly 10% of Democrats, 7% of Republicans and 14% of people unaffiliated with either major party.

Only about half of Americans have a passport, which can take four to six weeks to obtain and cost around \$165. And the processing time for an online birth certificate can take anywhere from a few days to 12 weeks. Married women who have changed their names might need additional documentation, such as a marriage certificate.

A proof-of-citizenship requirement that passed in Kansas 15 years ago ended up blocking the voter registrations of more than 31,000 U.S. citizens who were otherwise eligible to vote before the law was halted by the courts.

The president and many of his Republican allies have been promoting the narrative that voting by noncitizens is a major problem, when in fact it's quite rare. The federal voter registration form already requires people to attest that they are U.S. citizens. Violating that is punishable as a felony that can lead to prison or deportation.

In another major voting case, the U.S. Supreme Court is due to issue an opinion soon on whether mail ballots must arrive by Election Day. That could immediately change the rules in 14 states that allow grace periods ranging from days to weeks if the ballots are postmarked by Election Day.

NATO's Trump whisperer meets the president in an effort to appease him before next month's summit

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte laid on the flattery with President Donald Trump on Wednesday, pressing the case for a military alliance that the volatile U.S. leader has sharply criticized as the Pentagon reviews the size of the U.S. military footprint in Europe.

Trump has repeatedly slammed NATO, arguing the U.S. carries more than its fair share of military spending. But his grievances have been louder since the Iran war, as he fumed over the fact that some member countries ignored his call to help him restart oil trade through the shuttered Strait of Hormuz.

"They weren't too nice to us in our recent little military skirmish," Trump said of NATO allies as he introduced Rutte during their Oval Office meeting.

Subsequently pressed on what key U.S. allies could do to get back on his good side, Trump responded, "Just be loyal."

"We don't need their money — we don't need anything," the president added. "We have the most powerful military in the world by far. But I just want loyalty."

Trump has renewed his threats to leave the 77-year-old alliance, raising the stakes before the NATO leaders' summit in Turkey next month. But Rutte, who has become known as a Trump whisperer for his ability to charm the president, took on the now-familiar role of attempting to appease him anew.

Rutte pushed back gently against Trump's complaints, saying, "I know there have been isolated cases about which you are really disappointed, but generally speaking, your European allies have been there with you."

He also noted that 4,000 to 5,000 U.S. planes took off from bases in Europe before Iran and the U.S. agreed to a ceasefire.

Rutte gushed about Trump having been "very harsh" with defense contractors, saying, "I had one of them over in my office. He was still trembling."

That was a reference to Trump having held a series of meetings with Pentagon officials and leading military contractors at the White House recently, discussing ways to increase munitions production after

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the Iran war raised concerns about the U.S. eating into its stocks of missiles.

"This is your president, but also the leader of the free world, taking the leadership role, as is necessary," Rutte told reporters in the Oval.

The U.S. Defense Department is conducting a review

The visit, Rutte's fifth since Trump returned to power last year, comes after U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth last week lashed out at allies during a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. His department is in the midst of a six-month review of U.S. forces in Europe.

Hegseth echoed some of Trump's critiques, faulting European allies for not letting the U.S. use bases in Europe to attack Iran. NATO allies were not consulted about the war before the U.S. launched it with Israel on Feb. 28, and some have been openly critical of Trump's strategy.

Trump argues that NATO allies were not there for the U.S. and suggested leaving the alliance, which was founded in 1949 to counter the Cold War threat posed to European security by the Soviet Union. At the heart of their treaty is a mutual defense agreement in which an attack on one is considered an attack on all. The only time it has been invoked was in 2001, to support the United States after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

The Pentagon's warning that it will reduce its military presence in Europe to focus on threats elsewhere was the latest upheaval for the 32-member alliance since Trump returned to office.

The Republican leader stunned European allies last year when he threatened to annex Greenland, a semiautonomous island that is part of ally Denmark.

Earlier Wednesday, the leaders of five big European NATO allies — Germany, France, the U.K., Italy and Poland — met in Berlin to prepare for next month's summit in Ankara, and Rutte joined them remotely.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said in remarks to reporters that the Ankara summit also should send the message that "we will do our part when the conditions are in place" to support an Iran peace deal.

French President Emmanuel Macron said, "We are in a moment of reconvergence between the Europeans and the Americans," and indicated that he hopes this will continue at the summit.

Flattering Trump was a key objective

During the meeting, Rutte gave a presentation using three boards on easels, touting U.S.-NATO ties. Joining Trump were Hegseth, Vice President JD Vance and other top administration officials.

After he was done, however, Trump spent long stretches not talking about NATO but instead boasting about his effort to beautify Washington. He even suggested that, two years ago, before he deployed the National Guard, the NATO chief might have "had a good chance of being mugged, although you're a very big guy."

"They would have mugged him up. They would have beaten the hell out of him," Trump said to laughs. He further suggested that, previously, "nobody wanted to go out" in the nation's capital and "even if you got into the restaurant, they'd rob when you were in."

Nevertheless, a chief part of Rutte's mission these days is keeping the U.S. in NATO, and he's proven himself adept in the past at subduing Trump's frustrations.

Rutte frequently credits Trump with getting NATO members to increase their defense spending. The president last year pressured leaders to agree to invest 5% of their GDP annually in defense by 2035.

"He is completely committed" to the NATO alliance, Rutte said after leaving the White House, though he added, "I expect allies to spend more to equalize with the United States."

The lengths to which Rutte is willing to go in praising Trump have at times raised eyebrows, such as when he referred to the president as "daddy" during the alliance's summit last year.

He then sent him a fawning text message that employed one of Trump's favorite flourishes, capitalizing random words. "Europe is going to pay in a BIG way, as they should, and it will be your win," Rutte said.

Trump shared the private message on social media for the world to see.

He did it again in January, blasting out another Rutte message that closed with: "Can't wait to see you. Yours, Mark."

Trump-endorsed de la Espriella declared winner of Colombia's presidential runoff election

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Conservative outsider Abelardo de la Espriella, a millionaire political neophyte, will be Colombia's next president after electoral authorities on Wednesday declared him the winner of Sunday's runoff election.

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. He defeated progressive lawmaker Iván Cepeda by 1 percentage point, or more than 251,000 votes.

The result effectively was an indictment of outgoing President Gustavo Petro's government, whose policies Cepeda had promised to continue, including a largely failed effort to establish dialogue with multiple armed groups.

Electoral authorities published all but a fraction of the vote count hours after polls closed Sunday. Petro and Cepeda did not accept those results, with the latter saying he would wait for a recount to do so. Authorities finished the recount before declaring de la Espriella's victory.

De la Espriella's win adds 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 take a heavy-handed approach to combating violent crime with strategies borrowed from Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's playbook, including building mega-prisons. Those tactics have lowered homicide rates in the Central American country but have fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

Earlier Wednesday, Cepeda conceded the election to de la Espriella and accepted a Senate seat reserved for the runner-up in the presidential contest.

"We assume with serenity, responsibility and absolute resolve — and let there be no doubt about it — the role that circumstances demand of us," Cepeda said in an address to the nation. "We will exercise a democratic, vigilant and constructive opposition."

De la Espriella, 47, will begin a four-year term Aug. 7.

In a statement on Wednesday, his campaign said the president-elect's "purpose is to work for national unity, with the people and for the people." The campaign also stated his government will be committed to guaranteeing "the right to political opposition and peaceful protest, within the framework of the Constitution, the law and respect for democratic institutions."

A day earlier, de la Espriella announced he was putting together his cabinet. He also said he plans to add Colombia to the Trump-dubbed "Shield of the Americas," a coalition of countries purportedly aimed at cracking down on criminal groups in Latin America.

More than 26 million people voted in the polarizing runoff, setting a historic record. 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.

Trump refuses to sign bipartisan housing bill into law. What does that mean for homebuyers, renters?

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A sprawling legislative package aimed at lowering the cost of housing and spurring more home construction won bipartisan approval from Congress this week, but it's hit a major roadblock in becoming law: President Donald Trump.

The White House supported the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, but on Wednesday Trump canceled the signing ceremony for the bill, saying he would not sign the measure until Congress passes legislation that would require proof of citizenship for all voters.

Here's what to know.

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How significant is this housing legislation?

The measure is the culmination of months of negotiations by lawmakers who combined dozens of bills meant to address how housing affordability for both renters and aspiring homeowners in the U.S. has grown increasingly out of reach for many Americans.

The bill would reduce federal regulations, streamline environmental reviews, speed up the construction process and curb the influence of corporate landlords by limiting their ability to purchase single-family homes.

Still, it's not a silver bullet for all the factors that contribute to reduced housing affordability, including lack of construction labor, rising insurance costs and years of subdued wage growth relative to sharply rising rents and home prices.

Even so, the bill has drawn broad support from the real estate industry, including organizations representing homebuilders and apartment complex owners, as well as housing advocates.

"We need more homes built, and legislation that removes construction barriers is exactly what the market needs right now," said Daryl Fairweather, chief economist at Redfin. "Homebuyers who were hoping for relief may have to wait even longer, and in a market already starved for inventory, that's a tough pill to swallow."

What led lawmakers to pass the first major housing legislation in decades?

Housing has grown into a hot-button issue among voters in recent years as homeownership and rents in many areas have become less affordable for many Americans.

The U.S. housing market has been in a slump since 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes were essentially flat last year, stuck at a 30-year low. While sales accelerated in May to their fastest pace since December, they continue to hover close to a 4 million annual pace, far short of the historic norm that is closer to 5.2 million, limited partly by elevated mortgage rates.

Years of soaring home prices, especially in the early part of this decade when rock-bottom mortgage rates fueled a buying frenzy, have left many would-be homebuyers frozen out of the market. And a chronic shortage of homes for sale nationally, due partly to years of below-average new home construction, has helped prop up home prices even in a multiyear sales slump.

Home prices have increased 54% nationwide since 2020, and last year the median existing single-family sales price was nearly five times the median household income, according to researchers at Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

Renters, meanwhile, have seen little improvement in affordability. While the median U.S. monthly rent has been declining for nearly three years, it was still 17.2% higher in May than before the pandemic, according to data from Realtor.com.

What if the bill doesn't become law?

One of the biggest hurdles to homeownership has been an imbalance between supply and demand in many parts of the country.

When there are fewer homes on the market, that helps prop up home prices even during a slowdown. Conversely, during times when mortgage rates are low, buyers end up competing for fewer homes, which drives up prices.

The housing bill would help increase the supply of housing, particularly when it comes to smaller, more affordable starter homes.

It amends existing regulations to boost construction of manufactured homes, which tend to be more affordable than other types of newly built homes, and expand access to government-backed loans to include construction of standalone dwellings a homeowner can rent out.

The bill also provides new dollars for communities to turn abandoned infrastructure into housing, and provides guidelines for communities that want to reform outdated zoning regulations, which often limit larger housing developments.

"It won't make housing more affordable overnight, but in the coming years we will see more construction of town homes, multifamily housing, and ADUs," notes Fairweather, saying the additional supply "will

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relieve the pressure on home prices, and make it easier for homebuyers to break into the market."

What about renters?

The legislation includes a broad set of provisions, including an expansion of government rental assistance and affordable housing construction programs, and measures aimed at encouraging state and local governments to make it easier to build new homes and apartments, including federal funding to places exceeding the median rate of homebuilding.

In addition, the bill would raise limits on the number of public housing units that can receive financing for renovations and codify a recovery program to help expedite funds to communities rebuilding after disaster.

It also requires new renter protections.

"Families are struggling under the heavy weight of housing costs that have climbed for decades," said San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. "There's no time to waste. Without federal action, America's housing shortfall will continue to grow, falling another 2 million units behind in the next five years."

What happens if the bill signing is held up for weeks or longer?

While hailed as a significant step, the federal government's power to dictate things like how many homes are built or rents is limited, given that most of the regulations on construction, such as zoning laws, and other facets of real estate are determined by local and state governments.

So, even if the bill is delayed, it's not like it would have had an immediate impact on local house prices, for example. But it would set back the clock on new construction projects that might not otherwise get the go-ahead.

"The sooner this bill becomes law, the sooner builders and homebuyers will benefit from its downstream effects," said Danielle Hale, chief economist at Realtor.com. "Even if the president were to sign this bill immediately, many of the provisions will take time to impact builder planning and projects in the pipeline, so there is going to be a delay before consumers feel the impacts of this legislation either way."

What happens next?

Trump's decision to not sign the legislation into law Wednesday could end up just temporarily delaying the measure from taking effect.

The House passed the bill in a 358-32 vote on Tuesday and the Senate passed it 85-5 on Monday. That level of support is what's colloquially called a veto-proof majority.

Still, if Trump were to veto the measure, the Senate and the House would have to vote again to override the veto.

It may not come to that.

Speaker Mike Johnson said Wednesday that he had spoken with Trump earlier in the day and was confident the president would sign the bill.

"The president, when we go through the details of the bill, he's going to understand that it's a good product," Johnson said.

Rural area in Northern California jolted by its biggest quake since 1940

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A rural area of Northern California experienced its strongest earthquake since 1940 on Wednesday morning, causing some injuries but no immediate reports of major damage, officials said.

The epicenter of the quake, with a preliminary magnitude of 5.6, was about 7 miles (12 kilometers) northwest of the agricultural town of Willits, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It was widely felt, including in the coastal city of Fort Bragg. The initial quake was centered inland about 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Fort Bragg at 8:10 a.m. PT, and the USGS said it was about 5 miles (8 kilometers) deep.

The area in Mendocino County dotted with small, agricultural towns is 140 miles (225 kilometers) north-

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east of San Francisco.

Heather Rose, a Mendocino County spokesperson, said that hospitals had reported some injuries but that she had no details on their nature or extent. She said officials plan to meet later Wednesday when more information could be released.

Power outages are affecting more than 6,000 residents of six towns near the epicenter, the Mendocino County Executive Office said in a statement. The office encouraged people to stay off the highways and roads to allow work crews to inspect for damage and make repairs.

Brie Leon and her colleagues had just opened Club Calpella Restaurant when the building started shaking, rattling plates and liquor bottles.

"I had just turned the open sign on and went back into the kitchen, and that's when it happened," she said. "It almost felt like something hit the building."

The restaurant is in Calpella, California, a town about 10 miles (16 kilometers) south of the epicenter and in a region of Mendocino County that has been struck by smaller quakes this year.

This was the biggest earthquake in nearly nine decades in the region, which is not on a major fault, said Lucy Jones, a veteran California seismologist.

"The area is not without earthquakes, but they're usually smaller than this," Jones said. She added that aftershocks are likely, but they'll "probably stay on the low side."

Three other quakes under a 2.7 magnitude struck near the epicenter within an hour.

Leon said the quake knocked frames off the walls and bottles off the shelves in the restaurant and the stockroom next door. She and other servers were cleaning up not long after to welcome customers for breakfast.

"It wasn't a big, big quake, but things went everywhere," she said.

Alan Harris and his family were at home in Kelseyville, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southeast of the epicenter, when he received an earthquake alert on his cellphone. Soon after, the house began shaking.

"I yelled downstairs immediately to my wife and daughter to make sure they were hanging on," Harris said. "It was scary. You could hear things crashing, mostly on the third floor of the house."

A security camera inside Harris' home shook vigorously as the quake struck. A few loud, crashing sounds can be heard on the video footage before Harris calls out: "Is everyone OK?"

It lasted only about 30 seconds. Framed photos fell off the walls and a computer monitor was knocked over, Harris said. Nothing appeared badly damaged, he added, noting he found no structural damage to the house.

Nearly 657,000 earthquake early warning alerts were sent by the MyShake App throughout Northern California, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services said. Cal OES had not received any reports of damage or injuries, but it was coordinating with authorities to evaluate impacts, the office said in a statement.

Hundreds of thousands more people received alerts through other public safety alert systems, but those numbers have not been finalized, said Robert de Groot, a scientist with the ShakeAlert operations team.

"The alert deliveries for this are going to be well over a million," Groot said.

US stocks end mixed, weighed down by more losses for tech giants

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks wavered to a mixed close on Wall Street Wednesday as technology stocks once again weighed down the market.

Declines for several influential tech heavyweights, including Microsoft, pulled the broader market lower even though most stocks in the S&P 500 gained ground. That was also the case on Tuesday, when tech stocks pulled the market lower despite broader gains elsewhere.

The S&P 500 fell 7.24 points, or 0.1%, to 7,358.22, despite nearly 2 out of every 3 stocks gaining ground. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which is less weighted with tech stocks, rose 182.06 points, or 0.4%, to 51,848.90.

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The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite fell 110.40 points, or 0.4%, to 25,476.64.

A 2.3% drop in Microsoft was the heaviest weight on the market. Oracle slumped 4.6%.

Many large tech companies have been behind Wall Street's record-setting run throughout the year, but analysts have warned their valuations may have become stretched.

"The next phase of the AI investment cycle is beginning to collide with market discipline," said Jason Vaillancourt, chief portfolio strategist at Columbia Threadneedle, in a research note.

Google's parent company Alphabet slipped 0.2%. The company is replacing Verizon in the Dow on Monday. The company's inclusion in the S&P 500 means more to investors, however, because 401(k) accounts are much more likely to include an S&P 500 index fund than anything tied to the Dow.

Alphabet will become the fifth Magnificent 7 company to join the Dow. The others are Apple, Amazon, Microsoft and Nvidia.

Oil prices continued slipping as the U.S. and Iran negotiate a possible end to their war. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 3.8% to \$73.87 a barrel. It has been trading below \$80 in recent days but is still above the roughly \$70 per barrel it was trading at in late February before the war began. U.S. crude prices fell 3.9% to \$70.34 a barrel.

Oil companies had some of the biggest losses. Exxon Mobil fell 2% and Chevron lost 2.6%.

Some of the bigger winners on Wall Street included homebuilders following approval of legislation beneficial to the industry. KB Home surged 16.7% and D.R. Horton jumped 6.7%.

Treasury yields mostly fell, removing some pressure from stocks. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.40% from 4.50% late Tuesday. The yield on the 2-year Treasury eased to 4.15% from 4.16%.

Treasury yields are still elevated from earlier in the year, especially the 2-year Treasury, which more closely tracks anticipated action from the Federal Reserve. The central bank has signaled that it is considering raising its benchmark interest rate by the end of the year. Wall Street is forecasting at least one hike to interest rates by December, according to data from CME Group.

The Fed is worried about stubborn inflation, which had been rising throughout the year as tariffs raised the costs for a wide range of goods. A shock to energy prices because of the U.S. war with Iran worsened inflation. Gasoline prices surged and shipping costs rose. The impact is expected to linger even as oil and gasoline prices fall.

The central bank will get an update on inflation Thursday, when its preferred measure for prices is released. Economists expect the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, or PCE, to show that prices rose 4.1% in May. That would be the highest level in three years.

"Thursday's PCE is set to take on greater importance for markets, especially since Federal Reserve Chair (Kevin) Warsh was emphatic in last week's meeting about the central bank's desire to achieve price stability," wrote Rick Gardner, chief investment officer at RGA Investments, in a research note.

Gold prices fell 3.4% to settle at \$4,008.80 an ounce. Earlier in the day, gold briefly traded below \$4,000, and hasn't settled below that level since November. Gold was above \$5,000 an ounce earlier in the year. The precious metal is often seen as a barometer of the appetite for risk among investors, with more buying at times of increased anxiety and more selling as anxiety eases.

Markets were mixed in Europe.

Ex-chief of staff to former NYC Mayor Eric Adams charged with taking bribes

By DAVE COLLINS, JAKE OFFENHARTZ, MICHAEL R. SISAK and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A former chief of staff to ex-New York Mayor Eric Adams was arrested Wednesday in a federal bribery case about a lucrative migrant shelter contract, the latest sign that prosecutors continue to scrutinize Adams' inner circle months after the scandal-bruised Democrat left office.

The charges against Frank Carone are the latest in a string of corruption allegations leveled at the former mayor — who was himself indicted on bribery and other charges that were later dismissed — and key

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aides. Separately, federal authorities searched the homes of current and former New York Police Department leaders Wednesday in connection with a different bribery investigation.

Adams was not accused of wrongdoing in Carone's indictment. It alleges the ex-chief of staff exploited his position to get more than \$100,000 in payoffs for steering a migrant shelter contract to a hotel that social service officials had deemed unsuitable.

"Frank Carone was entrusted to run our city government and instead put his own wealth and status above duty," Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah Winik told a court.

Carone and his brother, Anthony Carone; hotel owner Yan Po Zhu, and hotel employee Crystal Chen pleaded not guilty to various charges. The brothers sat across from each other at a defense table, where Anthony Carone rubbed his face and Frank Carone appeared to read along during the proceedings.

Frank Carone's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, said outside court that the case was based on "assumption after assumption after assumption."

"There is not one fact that indicates Frank Carone did anything specific to influence anything in our government," Aidala said. The other defendants and their attorneys declined to comment.

Frank Carone and the Sabrina Carpenter church video

Carone, a former Brooklyn Democratic Party lawyer and longtime political power broker, is widely credited as one of the architects of Adams' political rise. He also drew attention for his financial dealings with a Roman Catholic priest who let pop star Sabrina Carpenter film scenes for a provocative music video in a church.

Federal investigators later subpoenaed the church. "They found nothing," Aidala said Wednesday, contending that the government first targeted Carone, then looked for a case.

Carone played a key role in Adams' 2021 mayoral campaign, was chief of staff in 2022, then left and formed a political consulting firm.

He "dedicated decades of his life to public service, the legal profession and helping countless individuals, businesses, and charitable organizations throughout New York," Adams spokesperson Todd Shapiro said in a statement.

Indictment focuses on how the hotel became a shelter

Starting in 2022, the city scrambled to expand its shelter capacity amid an influx of migrants. Zhu's hotel got \$6.8 million to shelter some of the new arrivals, though the city's Social Services Department had repeatedly rejected the facility, which was small and in a Queens neighborhood where residents objected to more shelters, according to prosecutors.

Prosecutors said in court papers that Frank Carone accepted around \$120,000 in bribes from Zhu and Chen to intercede on the hotel's behalf. The money was passed through Anthony Carone's law firm, according to the indictment.

In a September 2022 text message, Zhu asked Frank Carone for help getting the hotel an immediate one-year contract, according to the indictment. It said Carone replied by asking for the address, and Zhu gave it, adding: "Thank you my big guy."

In December 2023, Zhu texted Carone: "I asked my partners to pay you for a year," according to the document. Carone, who is also charged with obstruction of justice, deleted the message after learning he was under investigation, prosecutors said.

Zhu "is anxious to establish his innocence," lawyer Stephen Scaring said before the arraignments. All four defendants later were released on bond, ranging from \$100,000 for Chen to \$8 million for Zhu.

Police officials' homes searched in unrelated probe

Separately Wednesday, the FBI and the NYPD executed search warrants at the homes of NYPD Chief of Manhattan South James McCarthy and former Deputy Commissioner Tarik Sheppard, and federal agents also searched former Chief of Department Jeffrey Maddrey's home, according to a law enforcement official briefed on the searches. The official, who was not authorized to discuss the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the searches were part of a bribery investigation that grew out of an inquiry into Maddrey.

There was no immediate response to an inquiry to Maddrey's attorney. Attorney information for Shepard and McCarthy was not immediately available.

There is no public indication of any arrests as part of those searches.

They were not related to Frank Carone's arrest, according to another person familiar with the matter who also was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the case and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Once the NYPD's highest-ranking uniformed officer, Maddrey resigned in 2024 over allegations that he demanded sex from a subordinate in exchange for opportunities to earn extra pay. Maddrey denied the claims of a quid pro quo.

Adams was indicted in 2024 on charges of accepting illegal campaign contributions from Turkish officials and others in exchange for political favors. The case was tossed by federal Justice Department leaders who said it was distracting Adams from assisting in Republican President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. Adams has denied wrongdoing.

After skipping last year's Democratic primary, Adams mounted but eventually abandoned an independent campaign for a second term.

A member of the cultlike Zizians group is charged in the killings of her parents in Pennsylvania

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

A member of the cultlike group known as Zizians has been charged with murder in the shooting of her parents at their Pennsylvania home on her 30th birthday, and a prosecutor said Wednesday she wasn't acting alone.

Delaware County District Attorney Tanner Rouse said evidence from a neighbor's doorbell camera, ballistics and analysis of cellphone records have left investigators certain Michelle Zajko is at least partly responsible for the deaths of her parents, Rita and Richard. They were shot in her childhood playroom on New Year's Eve 2022, surrounded by her old dolls and toys.

"At this time we do not know who her co-conspirators were, but we are very certain that Michelle Zajko was in the home and arranged for the death of her parents," Rouse said.

The new charges against Zajko, who has been jailed in Maryland on other charges since February 2025, include murder, burglary and conspiracy charges in her parents' deaths. She has denied killing them, and in court filings suggested her father might have killed her mother and himself.

"I didn't murder my parents," she wrote in an April 2025 "Open Letter to the World" that her attorney sent to The Associated Press.

Authorities had long described Zajko as a person of interest.

The two deaths are among six linked to the Zizians, a group of young, highly intelligent computer scientists who appear to share radical beliefs about veganism, animal rights, gender identity and artificial intelligence. Since 2022, members have been tied to the death of one of their own during an attack on a California landlord, the landlord's subsequent killing, the Zajkos' deaths in Pennsylvania, and a highway shootout in Vermont that left a border agent and another Zizian dead.

Ballistics and list of mistakes provided links to Zajko

In the Pennsylvania case, investigators spent years painstakingly collecting evidence, Rouse said, including video from a neighbor's doorbell camera that captured two people getting out of a car outside the Zajkos' home in Chester Heights, a voice shouting "Mom!" and another voice exclaiming, "Oh my God! Oh, God, God!"

Authorities haven't found a weapon, but Zajko made a list describing mistakes such as leaving shell casings behind, he said. Those casings matched ammunition from Zajko's home in Vermont and from a firing range in her backyard, Rouse said.

"If she wasn't the one who actually pulled the trigger, she was certainly aligned with those who did," he said.

Online court records didn't indicate whether Zajko had an attorney in the Pennsylvania case as of Wednes-

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day. An attorney representing her in Maryland did not respond to a message seeking comment, and the Delaware County Public Defender's office declined to comment.

Zizians face charges in multiple states

Zajko, now 33, also is charged with providing the gun used to kill U.S. Border Patrol Agent David Maland in January 2025, though nothing has happened in that case. She was arrested in Maryland a few weeks later along with Daniel Blank and Jack "Ziz" LaSota, whom authorities describe as the group's leader. Police who responded to a landowner's complaint about suspicious people parked in box trucks on his property described them as having "ties with the Zizians Cult" and said they would be questioned about crimes across the country.

All three have pleaded not guilty to charges of trespassing and illegal gun and drug possession, while LaSota also has pleaded not guilty to a federal charge of illegal gun possession by a fugitive. A judge recently granted a defense request for a competency evaluation in the federal case.

In court filings, LaSota's attorneys said their client eschews the term Zizian and denies that she and her friends have formed a cult. Zajko has claimed authorities arrested the group in Maryland to prevent them from exonerating Teresa Youngblut, who has pleaded not guilty to murder in the Vermont shooting and could face the death penalty if convicted.

Zajko was living with Blank in Vermont at the time of her parents' deaths and was questioned there by police shortly after they died. A few weeks later, officers briefly took her into custody at a hotel while she was in Pennsylvania for the funeral but released her without charges. LaSota, staying at the same hotel, was charged with obstructing the homicide investigation and disorderly conduct. Her attorney at the time has said she is innocent of those charges.

Family questions remain unanswered in the Pennsylvania killings

Zajko had been estranged from her parents in the year leading up to their deaths, the prosecutor said. In a January 2022 text message to her father, she complained that her mother had "assumed the worst" about her since she was a child.

"Every time I interact with mom in a nonsuperficial way she spends the time insulting a life she knows nothing about," Zajko wrote. Hours before her death, Rita Zajko apologized to her daughter and wished her a happy birthday.

"That text went unanswered," Rouse said.

Richard Zajko's sister-in-law, Roseanne Zajko, thanked police and prosecutors Wednesday, saying that her family has endured "countless days of darkness and despair" waiting for justice.

"We don't know yet if the trial will begin to heal the void in our lives and the ache in our hearts, but we do know that the detectives, the DA's office, and we, the family, have done everything possible to achieve justice for Rick and Rita."

The prosecutor described their deaths as a crime that "goes beyond comprehension."

"I can't wrap my mind around or figure out what led to this point," he said. "We are clearly talking about someone that has gone down an unimaginably dark road and has led to a tragedy that just defies any sort of description."

New York sweep by Israel critics shines light on a fraught issue for Democrats

By BILL BARROW, STEVE PEOPLES and JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Varun Venkatesh cast his ballot in New York's primary this week, he thought about "a good litmus test for me as a voter." He wanted to know what the candidates are doing for the Palestinian cause.

The 27-year-old Brooklyn resident decided to support Claire Valdez, who was backed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani, over Antonio Reynoso, another progressive who was the choice of the Democratic establishment, because she had "a clear and more consistent stance."

Valdez triumphed in her congressional primary, as did two other insurgent candidates endorsed by

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Mamdani, and Israel was a key issue in each of the races. Now the question for Democrats is how many more voters like Venkatesh are out there as the party charts its path toward the November midterms and the next presidential election.

The war in Gaza began with Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which responded with a yearslong counterattack that left more than 73,000 dead. About 1,000 have died since a ceasefire was reached in October, according to the Hamas-run health ministry that does not differentiate between civilian and combatant casualties.

Human rights groups and a United Nations commission have described Israel's actions as a genocide, a charge that's been rejected by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Democrats on the left — and even some conservatives — have ratcheted up pressure to suspend U.S. aid to Israel, a shift that's been shadowed by a rise in antisemitism across the political spectrum.

"The Israel question has become defining," said Matt Bennett, who leads the centrist Democratic group Third Way and frequently criticizes progressives as jeopardizing outreach to independent voters. He argued that some in Mamdani's camp have embraced "a new level of extremism," warning that "Republicans are very good at weaponizing crazy ideas on the fringe against mainstream candidates."

The schism over Israel, which widened during Joe Biden's presidency and undermined Kamala Harris' bid to replace him, remains an open wound. How Democrats attempt to stitch it closed will help define their future. A step in any direction risks alienating pieces of the party's unwieldy coalition when it's trying to unify around the mission of retaking control of Congress and set the stage for winning the White House again.

Mamdani is unapologetic in his effort to reshape the Democratic Party from the mayor's office of the country's largest city. He sharply criticized the American Israel Public Affairs Committee for defending what he calls "a status quo of immorality" in Gaza, and voters who celebrated his slate's victories on Tuesday night chanted "Free Palestine."

The mayor, meanwhile, argues that New York should shape Democrats' search for their national identity in the coming years.

"When does the race for 2028 begin?" Mamdani asked last week on a stage with his slate of candidates. "It starts now."

Israel-Palestinian conflict animates Democrats' left flank

Even for a party accustomed to conflicts between progressives and moderates, the divide over Israel has been especially intense. Although the U.S. alliance with Israel once had bipartisan support, the ascendancy of Israel's right wing, led by Netanyahu, strained those ties over the years. Then the war in Gaza shredded them.

Biden was denounced as "Genocide Joe" by pro-Palestinian supporters, who shifted their attention to Harris once she replaced him as the Democratic nominee for president two years ago.

"She was trying to do the right thing," said Jamie Harrison, who led the Democratic National Committee at the time. "It was a hard and awkward place to be in."

Harrison said the war in Gaza helped cost Harris the state of Michigan, which has a sizable Arab American population. However, he doubts that it was a defining national issue then or now.

"It's one thing to be in New York. But I can tell you that most places, including where I am in South Carolina, it's not what people are talking about," he said. "They are concerned about affording gas and groceries and housing."

Harrison expects Democrats to look for middle ground in the future, which includes "still supporting Israel's sovereignty" while calling for "reducing U.S. aid to Israel and changing the nature of the relationship."

The issue puts a notable spotlight on Jewish Democrats who could become presidential contenders at the same time Mamdani wields his influence as the most prominent elected Muslim in U.S. politics.

When Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's name landed on Harris' list of potential running mates, activists on the left cried foul over his support for Israel — potentially previewing pressures he would experience in a White House campaign.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker was once a billionaire donor to AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobbying group, and a na-

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tional board member. He cut ties with the group after it aligned with Donald Trump, but the governor has continued to face questions about his past support.

Both Shapiro and Pritzker are seeking reelection this November before deciding on White House bids.

One primary victor blasted the 'hug Bibi' strategy

Finding middle ground has been difficult so far, as demonstrated by the primary in New York's 10th congressional district.

Brad Lander, the former city comptroller backed by Mamdani, successfully challenged U.S. Rep. Dan Goldman in the race.

Both candidates are Jewish, and both have criticized the Israeli government. But Lander says the war in Gaza is a genocide, and Goldman does not.

"Our party needs to admit that Joe Biden's 'hug Bibi' strategy was a catastrophic mistake," Lander said in his primary victory speech. He added, "We cannot keep paying for Netanyahu's wars with our tax dollars. Democratic voters are saying this, loud and clear."

Ari Rassouli, a voter in the district, said the incumbent's views on Israel were "one of the many reasons that I didn't like Dan Goldman."

Describing the war as a genocide, she said "a candidate that is in support of that has no place in our democracy at all."

While talking to reporters on Tuesday, Lander acknowledged that Israel was among the top issues along with affordability and immigration.

"I like talking to Jewish voters who feel anxiety about the times we live in and say, 'I have these values, I want to treat everyone like they're equal and with dignity and created in God's image. How do we navigate the times we're in?'" he said.

He added with a smile, "Those are probably the longest conversations at the polls." ____

Associated Press writers Anthony Izaguirre and Larry Neumeister contributed to this report.

US says chemical maker Chemours to pay \$450M to settle 'forever chemicals' case

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Wednesday reached a multi-state settlement with chemical giant Chemours Co. over years-long, illegal discharges of synthetic "forever chemicals" used to make products resistant to water, grease and stains. The settlement is the first by the federal government to resolve enforcement claims against a manufacturer of harmful chemicals known as PFAS.

Under the agreement, filed in federal court in West Virginia, Chemours will pay a civil penalty of \$22.5 million for alleged violations and spend \$90 million over 15 years to mitigate PFAS discharges in three states: West Virginia, North Carolina and New Jersey.

Chemours, a spin-off of chemical maker DuPont, also agreed to install PFAS pollution controls for and surface water discharges and air emissions at a West Virginia facility at an estimated cost of \$60 million, supply clean drinking water to communities near its West Virginia and New Jersey sites at an estimated cost of \$280 million; and implement controls to reduce releases of PFAS and other toxic chemicals from its facility in North Carolina, based on a pending independent assessment.

Combined, the penalties and relief programs are estimated to cost at least \$450 million, the Justice Department said.

The settlement allows Chemours to continue manufacturing PFAS for commercial and military applications while preventing future contamination and protecting communities from existing pollution, said Adam Gustafson, principal deputy assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division.

Justice Department says settlement protects public health

"The Trump administration recognizes the important role of Chemours for its commercial and military obligations," Gustafson said in an interview. "The settlement protects public health while preserving that important balance."

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The settlement against a major PFAS manufacturer “delivers on the Trump administration’s promise to make polluters pay and stop PFAS contamination at the source,” said Jeffrey Hall, assistant EPA administrator for enforcement and compliance assurance.

The agreement will greatly reduce PFAS contamination of water, land and air and even begin to mitigate past harm, Hall said. “This settlement brings Chemours into compliance with the law and holds it fully accountable,” he said.

In a statement Wednesday, Chemours said it has already begun planning and implementing operational improvements at its facilities and will take steps to mitigate future emissions and enhance existing programs.

“This settlement provides Chemours with greater clarity on future compliance requirements and actions to support long-term responsible manufacturing,” spokeswoman Jess Loizeaux said.

The settlement comes as the Trump administration is expected to propose softening Biden-era limits on “forever chemicals” in drinking water, while delaying but keeping tough standards for two common types of the substance.

The proposal will start the formal process of rolling back parts of the first-ever limits on PFAS in drinking water finalized during former President Joe Biden’s administration. Officials at the time found they increased the risk of cardiovascular disease, certain cancers and babies being born with low birth weight.

The agency is committed to addressing Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water while following the law and ensuring that regulatory compliance is achievable for drinking water systems, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said.

Chemours discharged PFAS into rivers in three states

The settlement determined that facilities Chemours operates in the three states have discharged PFAS into the Ohio River, Cape Fear River and Delaware River, respectively, in violation of permits required by the Clean Water Act and state laws. Chemours also violated legal requirements under the federal Toxic Substances Control Act at all three facilities.

As a result of the alleged violations, people living near the facilities were exposed to illegal PFAS, officials said. PFAS are widely used and found around the world, with scientific studies showing that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.

The violations continued for over a decade, the Justice Department said. The facilities were previously owned for many decades by DuPont. The settlement announced Wednesday does not resolve DuPont’s liability for past PFAS violations, officials said.

A federal judge last year ordered Chemours to stop discharging unlawful levels of cancer-causing chemicals into the Ohio River from the company’s Washington Works plant in West Virginia. The pollutants endanger the environment, aquatic life and human health, U.S. District Judge Joseph Goodwin wrote in the August 2025 order.

The West Virginia Rivers Coalition had asked Goodwin to require the company to immediately comply with its permit limits after violating them for more than five years.

DuPont, Chemours and another company, Corteva, agreed to pay New Jersey up to \$2 billion last year to settle environmental claims stemming from PFAS. The federal settlement does not affect the state case.

North Carolina AG blasts settlement

North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson called the settlement “an insult to the people of eastern North Carolina.”

His state is “ground zero for GenX contamination, but this deal does practically nothing to clean up our water,” said Jackson, a Democrat. GenX is a trade name for a synthetic chemical developed by Chemours as an alternative to PFAS but which has raised significant health and environmental concerns in its own right.

“Chemours made this mess, and Chemours should clean it up,” Jackson said in a statement.

The federal consent decree calls for 14 specific treatment systems to reduce PFAS in wastewater, stormwater and groundwater from the West Virginia plant. Chemours will test drinking water near the West Virginia and New Jersey sites and provide treated or alternative clean water.

Dispute over nuclear inspections shows how US and Iran are negotiating in public

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The head of the U.N.'s nuclear agency said Wednesday that Iranian nuclear enrichment sites would be visited by his inspectors as part of the interim U.S.-Iran deal to reach an end to the war. An Iranian diplomat instead insisted any such visit would only come after a final deal.

The comments echoed contradictory remarks about nuclear inspections a day earlier from the U.S. and Iran. During the week since the two countries signed the deal, their leaders have repeatedly disagreed in public about what that document actually means.

International Atomic Energy Agency head Rafael Mariano Grossi on Wednesday acknowledged the "war of words" over Iran's nuclear program. But the dueling narratives are playing out on several fronts, including Israel's war with Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon and how Tehran will spend billions of dollars once unfrozen.

Through the signing of the memorandum of understanding, the U.S. and Iran agreed to a 60-day period to iron out these and other details. Until that happens — during private talks — leaders from both countries will also continue to negotiate in public, raising the risks of derailing the shaky ceasefire in the region.

The fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, a threat to the U.S.-Iran diplomacy, flared on Wednesday. Israel launched an airstrike that killed two people in southern Lebanon, the country's state-run news agency said. It was Israel's first airstrike on Lebanon since the latest ceasefire took effect on Saturday. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strike.

UN's nuclear agency headsays inspections will happen

Since Israel launched a 12-day war on Iran in 2025, the IAEA has been blocked by Tehran from visiting enrichment sites. The Islamic Republic is believed to store enough highly enriched uranium to potentially build as many as 10 nuclear weapons, should it choose. Iran maintains that its program is peaceful, though it is the only country in the world to have uranium enriched up to 60% purity without a weapons program.

Grossi's remarks were the firmest yet from the United Nations agency, which is central to determining the status of Iran's nuclear stockpile.

"I can understand political statements, they are part of the reality, but the fundamental thing I would like to remind you and draw your attention to is that there has been a memorandum of understanding, signed by both presidents," he said at the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

The accord "says explicitly that the nuclear activities that are going to be carried out with regards to the nuclear material facilities will be supervised by the IAEA — in all letters," he said.

"Obviously, to do that, we will have to inspect," Grossi said. "Whether this happens the day after tomorrow or in one week or in 10 days, it's important, but not essential. This is going to happen."

The deal calls for Iran's uranium to be "downblended" from highly enriched levels.

Kazem Gharibabadi, an Iranian deputy foreign minister, took a swipe at Grossi after his remarks, saying Tehran didn't meet with him while in Switzerland.

"These issues will be reviewed and decided only within the framework of a final agreement and as a result of practical action by the other side to end all sanctions and other measures," Gharibabadi wrote on X.

He added: "You cannot advance the 'stir up and take over' policy with media hype."

IAEA blocked from seeing bombed sites

The IAEA has been allowed to visit other nuclear sites in Iran since the 2025 war. But without accessing the enrichment sites, the IAEA says it can't verify the status of Iran's stockpile. Both Iran and the IAEA say Tehran hasn't been enriching uranium, but nonproliferation experts worry the Islamic Republic may be moving its stockpile.

The U.S. and Iran agreed to the deal last week that calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of enriched uranium and waives U.S.-backed sanctions on Iranian oil.

But the uneasy ceasefire already has been tested by Iran saying it closed the Strait of Hormuz again over fighting between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel's defense minister said Wednesday the U.S. has not demanded that Israel withdraw from Lebanon.

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Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu later declared that "as long as I am Prime Minister, we will maintain the security zone in southern Lebanon."

Lebanese and Israeli officials are meeting this week in Washington as part of direct negotiations between the two countries, through which Lebanon hopes to reach a plan for Israeli withdrawal.

Technical-level talks between the U.S. and Iran are expected to resume early next week in Switzerland, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday. Pakistan has been a key mediator.

US has plan to oversee Iran's frozen funds

The interim deal also includes a pledge to unfreeze billions in Iranian assets. U.S. President Donald Trump wants that money to go toward buying American-grown crops, but Iranian officials say they should decide how its spent.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said his department would have people in Qatar to oversee what happens with the funds. He said in a CNBC interview that Iran would spend "a very large percent" of its released money on "U.S. foodstuffs and medicines."

"We will be recycling the money back into U.S. products," Bessent said.

Marco Rubio is in the Middle East

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio traveled in the Persian Gulf for a three-nation tour, starting with a meeting in Abu Dhabi with Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the State Department said Wednesday.

"We're not going to do anything that undermines the security of our allies," Rubio later said while in Kuwait, where the Trump administration announced the limited reopening of the U.S. Embassy that was closed at the height of the Iran war.

Before leaving for Bahrain, Rubio said ongoing negotiations include the creation of "hundreds of specific areas" where Lebanon's military could secure its territory. He called the discussions part of the process and said it's not going to "happen overnight."

How Americans are feeling about the country's 250th anniversary, according to new polls

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Duane Mitchell has big plans for America's 250th anniversary.

Mitchell, a 78-year-old veteran in Montana, plans to take a red, white and blue 1954 Chevrolet pickup that he restored and drive it in local parades for the Fourth of July. In honor of the country's milestone anniversary, he bought a decorative eagle to mount on the back of the truck, accompanied by American flags.

"I'll be driving my pickup," he said, referring to his role in the parades. "Usually we freeze a whole bunch of candy, and I have a couple of kids from down the block who get in the back and throw candy out. Everybody loves it."

Mitchell isn't the only one looking forward to this year's festivities. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults feel "proud" about the country's 250th anniversary, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Roughly 3 in 10 say "excited" describes their emotions. The milestone will be marked with events across the country, and President Donald Trump has planned several for the nation's capital, including a fair on Washington's National Mall.

But as the celebrations begin, many Americans also feel indifferent or conflicted about celebrating the country. Other Gallup polling shows that most Americans now feel the signers of the Declaration of Independence would be disappointed with how the U.S. has turned out, a substantial increase from 25 years ago.

Most Republicans and older adults feel proud

Most Republicans say that "proud" or "excited" describes how they are feeling about the United States' 250th anniversary. About 7 in 10 Republicans say pride describes their emotions, compared with about 3 in 10 independents and roughly 2 in 10 Democrats.

Older Americans — those ages 60 and older — are also mostly feeling proud, with about 6 in 10 saying

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this describes how they feel about the nation's anniversary.

Mitchell, the Montana veteran, wants the country to be "celebrating it to the maximum." As a Vietnam War veteran who was drafted into the war, he wants Americans to remember the men and women who have given their lives to protect the freedoms they have today.

"It was a sacrifice," Mitchell said, referring to his service. "The most important thing about the celebration is understanding that freedom is not free, and it never will be free, so you need to celebrate that."

About half of Republicans, 54%, say they feel excited about the country's anniversary.

As the country marks 250 years of independence, most Americans believe the country has succeeded in achieving its founding ideals, according to new Gallup polling. About 7 in 10 U.S. adults say that America has succeeded "a great deal" or "a fair amount" in achieving the ideals for which the country was founded. That view is shared by a majority of Democrats, independents and Republicans — though Republicans are especially likely to say the country has succeeded.

Democrats and young people feel conflicted or indifferent

More Democrats and young people say "conflicted" or "indifferent" describes their feelings about America 250.

About 4 in 10 Democrats and roughly 3 in 10 adults under 30 say "conflicted" describes their feelings "extremely" or "very" well. About 3 in 10 in each case feel "indifferent."

Laura Davis, a 44-year-old in Chicago who identifies as a progressive liberal, has struggled with what she describes as the "American declarations of grandiosity" this year, including Trump's White House ballroom construction and the repainting of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. She believes that money could be better spent on Americans in need, as well as international aid, and she worries the country's reputation is being damaged by the Trump administration's actions.

"It doesn't mean we can't celebrate the things that do make America a unique and in some ways exceptional place to be," she said. "But I think it's more nuanced than that, and I hope that doesn't get lost in the celebration."

About 8 in 10 Americans say the signers of the Declaration of Independence would be disappointed with how the country has turned out, according to a new Gallup poll. Only about 2 in 10 say the signers would be pleased. That's down significantly from 1999 — the first time the question was asked — when 55% believed they would be disappointed and 44% said they would be pleased.

Sydney Crispin, a 39-year-old Democrat in Maine, believes the country's "incredible" foundation is worth celebrating. Still, she is conflicted by what she sees as a decline in people's ability to have respectful discourse, something she believes is at the heart of America's identity. She hopes communities find ways to celebrate the remarkable parts of America this Fourth of July while still reflecting on its areas for improvement.

Celebrating the 250th: Spending time with friends or family tops on list

Just under half, 44%, of U.S. adults plan to celebrate the country's 250th anniversary by spending time with friends or family, according to a recent Gallup-With Honor poll. About 3 in 10 U.S. adults say they plan to watch coverage of America 250 events on television or social media.

More than half of adults ages 65 and older plan to celebrate with friends or family, while nearly half plan to watch coverage of the event on television or social media. Adults under 30 are more likely to say they are not planning to celebrate at all.

The Gallup-With Honor poll found about 2 in 10 U.S. adults plan to participate in a neighborhood or community event, while approximately 1 in 10 say they will be attending an official America 250 event.

Lyle Nelson, a 67-year-old in Idaho, said he plans to maintain his tradition of watching the annual Macy's firework show at home.

Nelson — who agrees with a lot of what Trump has done in office — remarked that even though Trump was disappointed that he did not get reelected in 2020, he might be pleased that he's the one in the White House during this historic event.

"I wonder if he's thankful that he gets to be president during the 250th anniversary," Nelson said. "I think he'll be excited for that."

Ex-aides win primaries to replace retiring Democratic House members

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

BOWIE, Md. (AP) — U.S. Reps. Steny Hoyer and Jerrold Nadler, two of the top Democrats in Congress, are retiring when their terms expire in January, but they will continue to make their imprints on Washington.

The pair passed the torch Tuesday night to former aides who won the Democratic primaries to replace them on Capitol Hill, and because both districts are overwhelmingly blue, they are all but certain to win in November and get sworn in to replace their former bosses.

Hoyer and Nadler are the latest lawmakers to successfully anoint their successors after spending decades in Congress. Among 68 members of Congress not seeking reelection this year, at least five have endorsed former staffers to replace them and more than a dozen others have, to varying degrees, worked to smooth the path to Capitol Hill for their favored replacements.

The practice can be controversial, particularly when lawmakers try to strategically time their announcement to give favored insiders the upper hand. But even at a time when voters give Congress a dismal approval rating, they're often receptive to the recommendation of their own representative.

That was the case for Natasha Greensword, 45, who backed Adrian Boafu in Maryland's Democratic primary on Tuesday in part because he was endorsed by Hoyer, who has represented the area since 1981.

"It was a plus," Greensword said. There was also a racial component that resonated for Greensword, a Jamaican immigrant. "It did help him to have a white man endorsing a Black candidate and saying he's got our backs," she said.

Not everyone felt the same way, particularly in the anti-incumbent environment that influenced so many prominent Democrats' decision to step aside.

Norma James, 64, said she skipped over Boafu in part because of Hoyer's endorsement.

"If Steny was endorsing him, he's not the one you want," James said.

Indeed, not every outgoing lawmaker had luck endorsing a successor on Tuesday night. Retiring Democratic Rep. Nydia Velazquez backed Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, who lost Tuesday. That race was won by Assemblymember Claire Valdez, who was endorsed by New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

"You might actually not want the endorsement of a departing incumbent because even if that incumbent is personally liked, the base of the party may have a lot of members who are unhappy with the establishment in general," said Matthew Green, a politics professor at Catholic University of America. "And so they see an endorsement by an incumbent as actually a bad thing."

Retiring legislators can tip the scales

Many departing lawmakers prefer to keep their preferences to themselves when it comes time to hang it up. Others go to great lengths to arrange things how they want.

Most infamously, Democratic Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia of Illinois earned a formal reprimand from a bipartisan majority of the House for a particularly aggressive strategy to keep his seat in friendly hands.

Garcia announced his retirement plans just after the deadline to file paperwork to run for the seat. By then, his chief of staff, Patty Garcia, was the only candidate who had submitted the needed paperwork. She went on to win the primary for the Chicago-area district with 100% of the vote.

The maneuvering by Chuy Garcia and Patty Garcia, who aren't related, drove a wedge between House Democrats. Chuy Garcia dismissed allegations he was being deceptive, saying he made a last-minute decision not to run because of health and family considerations.

But Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, D-Wash., said Garcia's actions amounted to "election subversion" and introduced the resolution to reprimand him.

Meanwhile, Republican Sen. Steve Daines pulled a similar move in Montana. He quietly coordinated with former U.S. Attorney Kurt Alme, who filed paperwork to run for the office nearly simultaneously with Daines withdrawing from the race. It all went down minutes before the filing deadline. Alme faced no serious

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opposition for the party's nomination and won the primary with 76% of the vote.

Daines coordinated his surprise handoff with the White House, and President Donald Trump immediately backed Alme. The last-minute shuffle avoided a potentially damaging Republican primary and caught Democrats flat-footed.

Some lawmakers prefer more subtle endorsements

Other lawmakers have taken a lighter touch to try and sway the direction of their district after they're gone, and not always successfully.

Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., made clear that state Rep. La Shawn Ford was his preferred successor after nearly three decades in Congress, but that wasn't enough to clear the field for him. Ford eked out a narrow win in a crowded primary in March.

In California, Democratic Rep. Julia Brownley made a quick endorsement of Assembly member Jacqui Irwin. She still had a contested primary, but she comfortably won a spot in the general election.

Republican Rep. Ralph Norman had better luck in South Carolina. Nobody challenged his chosen successor, state Sen. Wes Climer, who ran unopposed for the party's nomination.

Former Speaker Nancy Pelosi didn't recruit a preferred replacement as San Francisco's representative in Congress, and she declined to weigh in on the contentious battle to replace her until the last minute. Days before the primary, she endorsed county Supervisor Connie Chan, helping her make it to the general election in November.

Hoyer and Nadler back former aides

Hoyer, 87, was the longtime No. 2 Democrat in House leadership. Nadler, 79, was the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee and is the dean of New York's congressional delegation after 34 years in Congress.

Both decided not to run for reelection this year in the face of a Democratic base hungry to push aside their party's aging leaders in Washington.

Hoyer backed his former campaign manager, Bofo, who is now a Maryland state delegate, in a crowded field of 24 candidates.

"Y'all, I gotta give a special thanks to my mentor, to my friend, Steny Hamilton Hoyer," Bofo said after winning the Democratic primary Tuesday night.

"Tonight, the Democratic voters of the 5th Congressional District decided that it's time to pass the torch to a new generation of leaders," he said. "And it's with great humility that I accept that responsibility."

Nadler endorsed state Assemblyman Micah Lasher, a longtime aide to New York Democrats including Nadler, in a feisty primary for the Manhattan House seat.

Lasher hailed his ex-boss in a victory speech, saying Nadler has been a political presence throughout his life.

"When I was born, I was already Assemblyman Nadler's constituent," Lasher said, adding that he later "watched as Congressman Nadler led fights long before they were convenient."

At least three other retiring lawmakers backed former aides to succeed them, including Chuy Garcia.

Republican Rep. Barry Loudermilk of Georgia endorsed his former chief of staff, Rob Adkerson, who lost the primary in a runoff. Rep. Ryan Zinke, R-Mont., endorsed his district director, Aaron Flint, within hours of announcing his decision not to run for reelection. Flint won a four-person primary earlier this month.

Today in History: June 25, Korean War begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, June 25, the 176th day of 2026. There are 189 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 25, 1950, war broke out in Korea as forces from the communist North invaded the South. The conflict would last for over three years and would bring about an estimated 4 million deaths, three quarters of them civilians.

Also on this date:

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In 1876, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, also known as Custer's Last Stand, began in the Montana Territory. As many as 100 Native Americans were killed in the battle, as were 268 people attached to the 7th Cavalry Regiment, including George Armstrong Custer and Mark Kellogg, the first Associated Press reporter to die in the line of duty.

In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which set a minimum wage, guaranteed overtime pay and banned "oppressive child labor," was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1947, "The Diary of a Young Girl," the personal journal of Anne Frank, a German-born Jewish girl who hid with her family from the Nazis in Amsterdam during World War II, was first published.

In 1973, former White House Counsel John Dean began testifying before the Senate Watergate Committee, implicating top administration officials, including President Richard Nixon as well as himself, in the Watergate scandal and cover-up.

In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health*, its first "right-to-die" decision, ruled 5-4 that family members could be barred from ending the lives of persistently comatose relatives who had not made their wishes known conclusively.

In 1993, Kim Campbell was sworn in as Canada's 19th prime minister, the first woman to hold the post.

In 1996, a truck bomb killed 19 Americans and injured hundreds at a U.S. military housing complex in Saudi Arabia.

In 2015, in the case of *King v. Burwell*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld nationwide tax subsidies under President Barack Obama's health care overhaul in a 6-3 ruling that preserved health insurance for millions of Americans.

In 2021, a white former Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, was sentenced to 22 1/2 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, a Black man whose death led to some of the biggest protests against racial injustice in the U.S. in generations.

Today's Birthdays: Civil rights activist James Meredith is 93. Singer Carly Simon is 83. Actor-comedian Jimmie Walker is 79. Musician Tim Finn is 74. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor is 72. Actor-writer-comedian Ricky Gervais is 65. Hockey Hall of Famer Doug Gilmour is 63. Author Yann Martel ("Life of Pi") is 63. Actor Angela Kinsey ("The Office") is 55. Actor Linda Cardellini is 51. Actor Busy Philipps is 47. Singer Benson Boone is 24. Actor Kylie Cantrall is 21. Actor McKenna Grace is 20.