

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 1 of 84

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Jungle Lanes earns USBC Gold Tier certification](#)
- [6- Land for Sale](#)
- [7- High Wind Gusts reported](#)
- [8- Gov. Rhoden Responds to Devastating Thunderstorm](#)
- [9- Senior meals are moving](#)
- [10- Brown County Commission Agenda](#)
- [11- Groton Jail Open House](#)
- [12- EarthTalk - Roadless Rule](#)
- [13- City Water Restrictions On](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Extreme damage from 131 mph wind brings governor and state response to Highmore](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: US Senate Majority Leader Thune's latest financial disclosure includes a book deal](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Senate farm bill draft focuses on farm economy, keeps 'Big Beautiful' SNAP cuts](#)
- [21- SD SearchLight: High court issues split decisions on Trump's control of executive board members](#)
- [23- SD SearchLight: US Supreme Court in Virginia case says police need warrants for cellphone location data](#)
- [25- SD SearchLight: US Supreme Court deals blow to Trump, ruling states can accept ballots after Election Day](#)
- [28- Weather Pages](#)
- [33- Daily Devotional](#)
- [34- Subscription Form](#)
- [35- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [36- News from the Associated Press](#)

Tuesday, June 30

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, tri tater, sauerkraut, fruit.

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

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

U12 Baseball hosts Sisseton, DH, 6 p.m., Falk Field

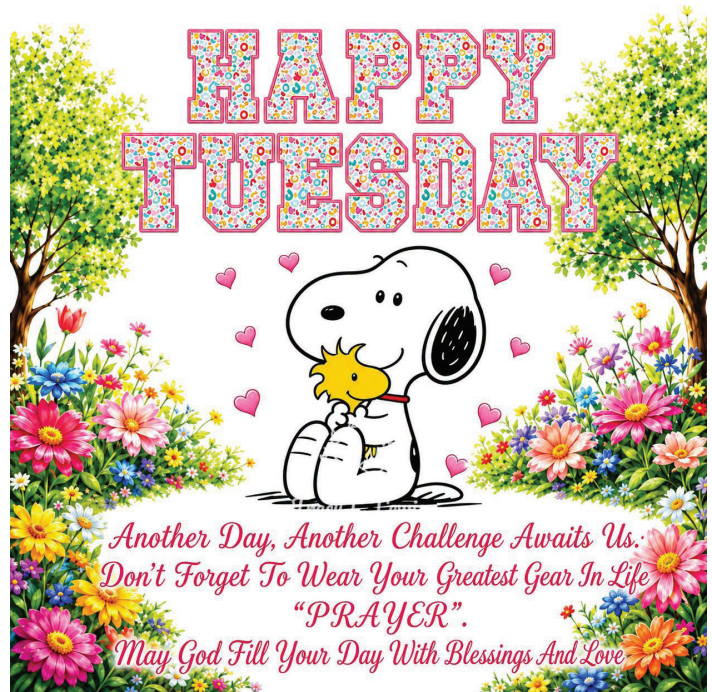
U14 Softball hosts Clark, 5:30 p.m.

T-Ball Scrimmage, 5 p.m., Falk Field

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Wednesday, July 1

Senior Meal: Beef hot dog on a bun, potato salad, baked beans, all American Apple Pie Bars

Chamber meeting, noon, at City Hall

Groton Legion hosts Lake Norden, 6 p.m.

U12 Baseball at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

U12 Softball (W&G) hosts Webster, 7 p.m. (DH)

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

U8 Softball (G&B) hosts Webster, 5:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.

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

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Thursday, July 2

Senior Meal: Meatloaf, au gratin potatoes, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

U12 Baseball hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (DH), Nelson Field

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

U8 Baseball (red), at Clark, 5:30 p.m., (DH)

U8 Baseball (blue), at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 2 of 84

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.

Presidential Power Expanded

The Supreme Court yesterday gave the executive branch power to fire most independent agency officials without cause, except for Federal Reserve leaders.

The conservative majority upheld President Donald Trump's firing of Democratic Federal Trade Commission member Rebecca Kelly Slaughter over ideological differences. The ruling overturns a 91-year-old precedent intended to protect independent agencies from political pressure; that case arose from a similar attempt by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to dismiss an FTC commissioner. In a separate decision, however, the court created a carve-out for the Federal Reserve, ruling that Trump cannot fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook while she contests mortgage fraud allegations.

Separately, the court upheld a grace period for mail-in ballots postmarked by Election Day and ruled cellphone location data is entitled to Fourth Amendment protections. The justices are due to deliver their remaining opinions of the term today, including rulings on birthright citizenship and transgender athletes.

Telescope Rescue Plan

NASA is preparing for a first-of-its-kind mission to save a telescope in orbit from falling to Earth. The mission could begin as soon as 6:23 am ET today.

Swift is a \$500M observatory launched in 2004 that detects gamma-ray bursts triggered by the deaths of massive stars. It is falling to Earth sooner than expected due to a recent uptick in solar storms, which can increase drag on satellites, causing them to lose altitude. Last year, Arizona-based Katalyst Space won a \$30M contract to rescue Swift by raising its orbit to around 370 miles before it falls below 185 miles around October. The 185-mile benchmark is considered the point of no return, after which the telescope is projected to make an uncontrolled reentry.

If all goes well, a rocket will propel Katalyst's device into orbit. From there, the device will approach Swift over several weeks and attach to it with custom, Lego-like robotic arms.

Game. Set. Wimbledon.

Wimbledon, the world's oldest tennis tournament, opened yesterday at London's All England Club, kicking off two weeks of matches headlined by Serena Williams' return and Novak Djokovic's pursuit of a record 25th Grand Slam singles title.

First held in 1877 as a fundraiser to replace a broken lawn roller, Wimbledon is the only Grand Slam still played on grass. The tournament features 128-player men's and women's singles draws, with competitors advancing through a single-elimination bracket. Defending champion Jannik Sinner enters as the men's favorite after rival Carlos Alcaraz withdrew with a wrist injury. On the women's side, defending champion Iga Świątek seeks to become the first woman to win back-to-back Wimbledon titles since Serena Williams in 2016.

Wimbledon is also famous for its traditions. Players wear white clothing, fans consume roughly 140,000 servings of strawberries and cream each year, and every tennis ball is stored at 68 degrees to ensure a consistent bounce.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 3 of 84

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Former NFL star Chris Johnson, 40, shares ALS diagnosis; watch the interview, where he uses an eye-controlled device to speak.

Actress Dame Penelope Keith, known for playing Margo in "The Good Life," dies at age 86.

Former NBA players Malik Beasley and Ed Davis among six indicted in sprawling federal sports gambling probe.

Norway's Viktor Hovland wins Travelers Championship after beating world's No.1 golfer, Scottie Scheffler, in playoff.

Brazil defeats Japan 2-1, off late goal.

Paraguay upsets Germany in first tournament penalty shoot-out.

Norway meets Ivory Coast at 1 pm ET, France meets Sweden at 5 pm ET, and Mexico hosts Ecuador at 9 pm ET.

Science & Technology

Ozone depletion may have begun as early as 1957, about 30 years before the ozone hole was discovered.

Some primate baby heads are nearly twice as large as their mother's pelvic space, challenging the theory that childbirth became uniquely difficult for humans when we evolved to walk upright.

Study reveals how leukemia cells can invade the lungs, leading to breathing problems, opening the door to targeted drug treatments.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.2%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +2.1%); Dow secures first close above 52,000.

Alphabet shares rise 5% after replacing Verizon on the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

Comcast to split into two publicly traded companies, spinning off NBC Universal and European media business Sky into a stand-alone media company, with the remaining company to focus on broadband and wireless services.

South Korea unveils \$520B government-backed plan to expand AI chip production in the country with Samsung and SK hynix.

Politics & World Affairs

US Supreme Court lets a \$5M civil judgment stand against President Donald Trump, declining a final appeal after a jury found Trump sexually abused and defamed writer E. Jean Carroll.

Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.) under federal investigation for suspected campaign finance violations.

Heat wave impacts the US' Midwest and Northeast, with temperatures in the triple digits in many states and no relief expected overnight; 2 million people in the West are under fire alerts.

Alex Murdaugh's retrial is set for next year after the South Carolina Supreme Court overturned his double murder conviction due to jury interference.

Jungle Lanes earns USBC Gold Tier certification

Groton's Jungle Lanes has earned a Gold Tier certification from the United States Bowling Congress (USBC), an achievement that recognizes the quality and condition of its bowling lanes.

The certification came after a recent inspection by the USBC, the governing body that sanctions leagues and tournaments across the country. During the inspection, officials evaluated the lanes for levelness, dimensions, surface condition and overall compliance with USBC standards.

Owned by Tim Janusz, Jungle Lanes received a score of 90.7 percent, placing the bowling center in the organization's Gold Tier category.

"It's just a good sign of how the lanes are holding up over time and are still good," said Jason Schaunaman, who helps oversee league and tournament operations at Jungle Lanes. "When we host tournaments and things, bowlers that come in know they're going to be on lanes that are of high quality and not going to be causing damage to their bowling equipment."

Janusz said the inspector, who has evaluated bowling centers across the country for 18 years, was especially impressed with Jungle Lanes' original hardwood lanes.

"He said if anybody ever complains about our lanes, tell them to stuff it," Janusz said with a laugh. "He said these are like the top five lanes he's ever done."

The inspection process has recently changed from every three years to every five years. Rather than simply passing or failing, bowling centers are now placed into Gold, Silver or Bronze tiers based on their scores.

Despite the age of the lanes, Jungle Lanes actually improved its score by approximately four percentage points compared to its previous inspection.

"Older wood lanes, even with another three or four years of wear and tear on them, actually didn't get any worse," Schaunaman said. "Maybe they got a little bit better when it comes to the ratings. It's a good testament to how well the lanes have been cared for from previous owners all the way to the current owners."

One of the factors that makes Jungle Lanes unique is that it still features its original hardwood lanes. While many bowling centers have converted to synthetic surfaces, the Groton facility has maintained its wood lanes through consistent care and maintenance.

Maintaining those wood lanes requires regular cleaning and oiling to protect both the lane surface and bowlers' equipment. In addition, the lanes must periodically be sanded and resurfaced to restore the finish and repair normal wear.



Tim Janusz is pictured behind the bowling lanes with the equipment that make bowling possible.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 5 of 84

"It's basically like a wood table or a wood fence," Schaunaman explained. "Every so often you have to take the finish off, do any filling that's needed and put a new finish back on."

That maintenance is already scheduled for later this summer. A lane resurfacing project is planned for August, helping ensure the lanes continue to meet the high standards that earned the Gold Tier designation.

For Janusz, owning a bowling center was never part of the original retirement plan.

After retiring from 3M, he and his wife, Donna, helped operate the snack shop at Village Bowl in Aberdeen while their daughter, Jillian Janusz Schaunaman, managed the bar there. When Jungle Lanes became available for purchase, Jillian encouraged her parents to consider buying it.

"We ended up cutting a deal with Sam and Dion Bahr, and we ended up buying this place," Janusz said.

Today, the business remains a family operation. Tim primarily works during the day, Donna helps during the lunch hours, and Jillian manages many of the evening operations, while her husband, Jason, oversees league and tournament bowling.

Although Janusz admitted he knew virtually nothing about bowling mechanics when they purchased the business, he has learned to repair the aging pinsetters himself through online videos, trial and error, and plenty of patience.

"I knew nothing about bowling at all," he said. "Now I can fix most of the stuff on it."

That learning process hasn't come without a few battle scars.

"I've gone through about 15 pairs of jeans since I bought this place," Janusz joked, recalling one incident in which a machine narrowly missed taking off part of his finger.

The Gold Tier designation reflects the ongoing commitment of the Janusz family to preserving one of the area's few remaining traditional wood-lane bowling centers. With the certification complete, Jungle Lanes will remain on the USBC's five-year inspection cycle before its next official evaluation.

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**

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 7 of 84

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

1228 PM CDT Mon Jun 29 2026

...HIGHEST WIND REPORTS...

Location	Speed	Time/Date	Lat/Lon
4 ESE Holabird	131 MPH	0615 AM 06/29	44.51N/99.52W
Highmore (SD Mesonet)	131 MPH	0625 AM 06/29	44.53N/99.46W
Highmore (SD Mesonet)	114 MPH	0620 AM 06/29	44.53N/99.46W
7 NNW Joe Creek Rec Area	112 MPH	0548 AM 06/29	44.24N/99.85W
Ree Heights (SDDOT)	112 MPH	0644 AM 06/29	44.53N/99.20W
Holabird	88 MPH	0620 AM 06/29	44.53N/99.68W
Westport	88 MPH	0833 AM 06/29	45.65N/98.58W
5 NE Ree Heights	87 MPH	0645 AM 06/29	44.56N/99.13W
Ree Heights (SDDOT)	84 MPH	0634 AM 06/29	44.53N/99.20W
Miranda (SDDOT)	84 MPH	0658 AM 06/29	44.98N/98.98W
5 NW Redfield	84 MPH	0721 AM 06/29	44.93N/98.68W
6 S Highmore	80 MPH	0617 AM 06/29	44.43N/99.44W
Rockham 6SSE (SD Mesonet)	80 MPH	0705 AM 06/29	44.82N/98.88W
Miller	74 MPH	0645 AM 06/29	44.52N/98.99W
5 NE Ree Heights	72 MPH	0639 AM 06/29	44.56N/99.13W
Highmore	71 MPH	0619 AM 06/29	44.52N/99.44W
Vivian (SDDOT)	70 MPH	0513 AM 06/29	44.85N/100.33W
1 E Polo	70 MPH	0649 AM 06/29	44.78N/99.88W
Sica Hollow (SD Mesonet)	69 MPH	0910 AM 06/29	45.74N/97.25W
2 SW Westport	68 MPH	0825 AM 06/29	45.63N/98.52W
2 SE Polo	66 MPH	0645 AM 06/29	44.76N/99.88W
Pierre 16 ESE (SD Mesonet)	65 MPH	0555 AM 06/29	44.29N/100.01W
6 SW Stratford	64 MPH	0745 AM 06/29	45.26N/98.40W
Andover (SDDOT)	62 MPH	0807 AM 06/29	45.41N/97.98W
Vivian 12S (SD Mesonet)	59 MPH	0520 AM 06/29	43.75N/100.30W
De Grey Hill (SDDOT)	58 MPH	0549 AM 06/29	44.28N/99.91W
4 S Athol	58 MPH	0721 AM 06/29	44.96N/98.68W

Observations are collected from a variety of sources with varying equipment and exposures. We thank all volunteer weather observers for their dedication. Not all data listed are considered official.

Gov. Rhoden Responds to Devastating Thunderstorm

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden deployed resources to Highmore, SD, to assist the small town as it cleans up from a devastating thunderstorm. Governor Rhoden also visited Highmore to assess the damages and show support for the community.

“South Dakota might be a small state, but we are mighty,” said Governor Larry Rhoden. “Immediately after the storm passed through, responders and volunteers quickly assessed the damage and began the recovery process. That’s what South Dakotans do. We show up to take care of our neighbors. And we will continue to show up to help Highmore get back on its feet.”

Around 6 am this morning, June 29, a thunderstorm packing 131-mph wind gusts moved through Highmore and the surrounding area. The straight-line winds uprooted trees, tore roofs from buildings, overturned vehicles, and bent wind turbines and other tower structures. The storm also knocked out power to the community. Only minor injuries have been reported.

Local officials have set up an emergency operations center to coordinate the emergency response. Governor Rhoden ordered the South Dakota Highway Patrol, Department of Transportation, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks, and nine inmates to provide perimeter security and debris removal resources. Volunteer resources from across the region also responded to assist with debris cleanup and providing food and water to displaced residents and responders.

A no-travel order remains in place for Highmore, and access to the town is limited to responders only as power lines are down and many streets are blocked by debris. Local and state officials will continue to assess damages and request additional resources if they are needed.

GROTON SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM = RELOCATION NOTICE =

The Groton Senior Nutrition Program is moving
to the **Groton Community Center**
beginning **July 1, 2026**.



Meal Pick-Up:

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
at the Community Center



Home Delivered Meals:

No changes to delivery service



Suggested Donation:

\$6 per meal



Congregate Dining:

Temporarily suspended
during the transition



For reservations call

Barb Pohlkamp at 612-388-2099

Thank you for your patience and support!



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 10 of 84



BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA GENERAL MEETING

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

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS

COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes*
4. Richmond Dam Update
5. Second Reading/Possible Adoption of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #325 – Rezone for James Arneson
 - b. Ord. #326 – Rezone for Katherine Osterman & Eric Olson
 - c. Ord. #327 – Rezone for TC Wright Trust
6. Approve and Authorize Chairman to sign SD Game, Fish and Parks Hunting Access & Habitat Contract
7. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign GoodShred Quote & Agreement
8. Approve to Surplus Items from Auditor & Treasurer
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of June 23, 2026
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Travel Request
 - e. Auditor's Report of Accounts for May
 - f. Lease Agreements
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

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

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

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

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

BUDGET WORK SESSION/MEETINGS

GROTON 1912 ★ HISTORICAL JAIL

315 1ST AVE. E, GROTON

Open House

**SUNDAY,
JULY 12,**

★
10 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

★



★ *Come see the
newly restored jail* ★



Roadless Rule Protecting American Forests On The Chopping Block

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine ~ by Shriya Surti

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What is the "roadless rule" and what will happen to our forests if the Trump administration succeeds in repealing it?

-- Chas Church, Portland, OR

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule was established in 2001 under the Clinton administration to protect nearly 60 million acres of undeveloped national forest land across the U.S. These roadless areas are rich in biodiversity, essential for clean drinking water, and serve as crucial carbon sinks in the fight against climate change. The rule prohibits most road



Conservationists fear Trump's gutting of the roadless rule could lead to the end of American wilderness. Credit:

Pexels.com.

construction and logging in these areas, preserving their natural state for future generations. Now The U.S. Forest Service has moved to rescind the 2001 rule to open millions of acres to logging, with the explicit goal to boost the U.S. timber industry.

In 2020, the Trump administration finalized a plan to exempt Alaska's Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. This decision opened over nine million acres of old-growth forest to development, including logging and road-building. Trump argued that lifting these restrictions would benefit local economies and promote resource access, but scientists and indigenous communities raised alarms.

The repeal of the Roadless Rule could have significant environmental consequences. Building roads and allowing logging in previously protected areas leads to deforestation and fragmentation of critical wildlife habitats. These disruptions threaten endangered species, increase the risk of invasive species, and degrade ecosystems that many communities rely on for hunting, fishing and clean water. Moreover, removing these protections reduces the forest's ability to store carbon, further contributing to global warming.

Beyond the environmental impact, rolling back the rule disregards decades of public support for preserving roadless areas. When the policy was first enacted, it received more than 1.6 million public comments, mostly in favor. Many tribal nations, particularly in Alaska, also oppose the rollback, citing damage to traditional lands and subsistence lifestyles. "The Trump administration now wants to throw these forest protections overboard so the timber industry can make huge money from unrestrained logging," said Drew Caputo, vice president of litigation at Earthjustice, an environmental law group.

While the Biden administration moved to restore protections to the Tongass and revisit Trump-era rollbacks, the future of roadless areas depends on continued public attention and action. These lands are not just scenic retreats, but they also protect biodiversity, store carbon and provide clean air and water.

The fight to preserve wild spaces will continue as humans stay informed. It is important to write to our state representatives about this issue, support conservation nonprofits, and push for strong federal policies that keep our forests intact.

Effective Immediately

CITY OF GROTON WATER RESTRICTIONS

*We appreciate your immediate cooperation
to keep our water levels safe.*

If your house number is odd, you may only water
on odd days (& **only before 11am or after 6pm**).

If your house number is even, you may only water
on even days (& **only before 11am or after 6pm**).



**Absolutely NO WATERING
between 11am - 6pm.**

Failure to comply will result in fines.
After a warning is issued, fines will start
at \$50 and double with each offense.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Extreme damage from 131 mph wind brings governor and state response to Highmore

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

HIGHMORE — Strong storms ripped through portions of central and eastern South Dakota early Monday morning, leaving roofs torn off homes, vehicles tipped over, grain bins caved in and wind turbine towers folded in half.

The National Weather Service received reports of wind gusts as high as 131 miles per hour in and near the small town of Highmore, where electricity was knocked out and much of the worst damage occurred. The service also received reports of tornadoes near Pierpont and Andover.

Matthew Cappucci, a meteorologist, wrote for The Washington Post that the 131 mph gusts "may be the strongest straight-line thunderstorm gusts directly measured since Aug. 1, 1983" in Maryland, where a gust was measured at 149.5 mph.

Gov. Larry Rhoden visited Highmore later Monday. Officials are surveying the damage, in preparation for a 30-day window to apply for federal assistance. To qualify for federal aid, a storm in South Dakota must cause at least \$1.8 million in damage to public property, Rhoden said.

"And so we'll continue to assess that, whether there's enough to qualify for an emergency declara-



Matilyn Kerr, left, and sister Brittany Kerr watch as a skid-steer loader pulls a tree from Brittany Kerr's yard in Highmore, South Dakota, on June 29, 2026, after a severe storm that morning. (Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 15 of 84

tion, but in the meantime, it doesn't matter," Rhoden told reporters. "We are, as a state, making use of any resources we can to lend to the city to help with their cleanup."

The Governor's Office said minor injuries to people had been reported.

State officials were posted throughout the town of about 650 residents Monday to direct traffic and help coordinate the response. The South Dakota Highway Patrol, Department of Transportation, Department of Game, Fish and Parks, and nine inmates were part of that effort.

Brittany Kerr, 38, is a life-long Highmore resident. She had never seen such severe storm damage.

"By 6 o'clock, it was very loud and just kind of almost sounded like a freight train coming through," she said. "I heard glass breaking and I could tell that trees or something fell into my house."

Kerr, who works in health care, helped evacuate dozens of residents from the nursing home in town. Her sister lent a hand in the cleanup on Kerr's property, which had uprooted trees and visible damage to the house. Throughout town, neighbors and emergency response teams helped residents remove broken tree limbs, downed trees and other debris from yards and roadways.

"In times like this, we're fortunate to live in an agricultural community where people can provide equipment and people are ready to work and help others," Kerr said. "And for the damage we sustained, I would say the town is cleaning up rather quickly."

Highmore was under a no-travel order Monday. Power lines were down and many roadways were blocked by fallen trees and debris.

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.



Sal Roseland, right, of Seneca, South Dakota, talks with Gov. Larry Rhoden as Rhoden operates Roseland's skid-steer loader on June 29, 2026. Roseland drove to Highmore after severe storms to assist cleanup efforts. (Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

US Senate Majority Leader Thune's latest financial disclosure includes a book deal

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, has an agreement to write his first book, according to his latest annual financial disclosure.

The report, filed May 13 and covering 2025, lists a royalty agreement with Hachette Book Group in New York for "an advance of royalties based on usual and customary terms for forthcoming but untitled book."

The disclosure does not identify the book's subject, expected publication date or the amount of the advance. The report lists February 2026 as the date of the agreement and says Thune did not receive any income from it in 2025.

Hachette did not respond to a request for more information. Thune's office declined to comment.

Hachette imprints published two books by former South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who now works for President Donald Trump's administration as special envoy for the Shield of the Americas: "Not My First Rodeo" in 2022 and "No Going Back" in 2024. "No Going Back" attracted national attention for Noem's account of fatally shooting a hunting dog and a goat.

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.



U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., speaks with reporters on Capitol Hill on Sept. 19, 2025. (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

Senate farm bill draft focuses on farm economy, keeps 'Big Beautiful' SNAP cuts

Proposal omits language on issues like Prop 12, pesticide labeling, E15

BY: CAMI KOONS

Nearly two months after the U.S. House passed a farm bill proposal, the Senate Agriculture Committee has released an initial draft of the omnibus legislation that covers everything from crop insurance to nutrition assistance.

The farm bill draft, dubbed the Agricultural Act of 2026 and put forward by Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., expands crop insurance coverage, shifts funding in conservation programs and maintains changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program made in Republicans' 2025 spending bill.

While the draft is fairly similar to the farm bill proposal advanced by the House at the end of April, it does not include language that livestock industries have called for

to stop the impact of state-specific laws on livestock production standards. The bill is also silent on the issue of pesticide labeling — another hot-button issue among farm, health and environmental groups — and on the year-round sale of a higher blend of ethanol.

Industry and political response to the draft language stressed the importance of Congress passing a farm bill, since the massive piece of legislation has not been reauthorized since 2018. Typically the bill is refreshed every five years, but lawmakers, unable to reach a compromise the past several years, have instead relied on federal spending bills to extend the essential provisions of the bill.

Boozman, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, said the text included bipartisan priorities to "strengthen the American farm economy, increase investments for rural communities and foster a more resilient agricultural sector."

"I'm proud to put forward this discussion draft that reflects the input and priorities of Republicans, Democrats, and most importantly, rural America," Boozman said in a statement. "This bill is built for the people who feed America, and I look forward to continuing conversations with my colleagues about how we can best serve them and the communities they call home."

Criticism on the proposal largely centered on its SNAP language.

SNAP continues to be pain point in farm bill discussions

Disagreements across the aisle over SNAP have reached new heights in the farm bill debates this year as Democrats push for changes to the program that were enacted through the Republican-led budget reconciliation bill. The legislation, known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act or Working Families Tax Cuts Act, initiated eligibility changes to the program and shifted part of the cost of benefits to the states.

The Senate farm bill draft builds on the provisions of the 2025-passed tax and spending cut bill, despite urging from Democratic lawmakers and anti-hunger groups to use the farm bill to reverse provisions in



The U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry released its 2026 Farm Bill draft.(Photo from USDA)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 18 of 84

the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that could lead millions to lose benefits.

Senate Agriculture Committee Democrats said in a statement that the text introduced by Boozman did not address the "devastating cuts" to SNAP put into law through H.R. 1.

"Senate Agriculture Committee Democrats have been clear that a Farm Bill must meet the needs of both farmers and families across America," the statement said.

The Senate farm bill draft builds on requirements for transparency in the SNAP program and would require agencies to report on all SNAP payment errors, regardless of dollar amount. Currently, errors are only reported if they are in excess of \$58.

This provision, which is also included in the House-passed farm bill, would provide a supplemental report on errors in the state. Only errors above the set threshold, \$58, would be used to calculate a state's payment error rate. This rate, under changes made in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, then determines the share of SNAP benefits that a state must pay. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that just nine states had rates below the 6% cutoff, set by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, that keeps the program 100% federally funded.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, shifting 5% to 15% of total benefit costs to the states will cost states an estimated \$9 billion. Ty Jones Cox, vice president for food assistance at the center, urged Congress to delay the October 2027 implementation of the provision.

"The farm bill proposal released today by Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman ignores the rapidly worsening hunger crisis in the wake of the 2025 Republican reconciliation law," Jones Cox said in a statement. "This proposal — or any legislation with farm relief that ignores the urgent need to mitigate this harm — should be rejected."

Lawmakers and agricultural groups that commented in favor of the Senate's draft language primarily spoke to the benefits the bill would provide to farmers, though some noted their support for the bill's continuation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act provisions.

"I am encouraged to see Chairman Boozman release a Farm Bill draft that builds on many of the priorities Senate Republicans fought to secure in the Working Families Tax Cut Act," Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, said in a statement. "I am proud the draft includes my proposals to crack down on foreign adversaries purchasing American farmland, increase transparency and accountability in SNAP, expand local meat processing options, and prohibit taxpayer dollars from funding research in countries of concern like China and Iran."

The Senate's draft reauthorizes SNAP appropriations at the same level currently allocated through 2031, which is the same approach taken in the House's version of the bill.

The Senate farm bill draft also expanded eligible forms of produce and dairy allowed in federal nutrition programs.

Both the House and Senate proposed bills included language to create a local food purchasing program with an authorization of \$200 million through 2031. The language is similar to a pandemic-era program called Local Food Purchase Assistance, which has since ended. The proposed farm bills stipulate this program would support state agencies' purchase of minimally processed food from producers within 400 miles of the distribution site.

Conservation Boozman's office said in a news release that the draft language "streamlines and strengthens" USDA conservation programs. Boozman said his bill also creates the "broadly popular" forest conservation program and the State Conservation Assistance Program to support state-led conservation efforts.

Environmental groups, however, criticized the bill for not expanding popular conservation programs, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, and the Conservation Reserve Program or CRP, both of which incentivize farmers to add conservation practices to their land.

While the Senate bill extends the CRP program, it caps enrollment at 27 million acres — the same cap set in the House-passed bill.

According to a Congressional Research Service report comparing the 2026 House-passed farm bill with current policy, language affecting conservation programs constitute the largest changes in the House version of the farm bill. The House farm bill would reduce the budget authority of the EQIP program by \$1

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 19 of 84

billion over the next 10 years, using the money to instead fund the Forest Conservation Easement Program and increases to other conservation programs.

The Senate draft also significantly shrinks the EQIP budget authorization and the Conservation Stewardship Program in a move the Environmental Working Group said "runs counter" to the Trump administration's Make America Healthy Again initiative.

"Prioritizing regenerative agriculture practices like cover crops and encouraging farmers to develop whole farm conservation plans are important steps to improving farm resilience," EWG's legislative director Geoff Horsfield said in a statement. "Rather than cut money for these popular programs, Congress must provide more funding to meet the growing backlog of farmer demand for the most effective conservation practices."

Ryan Bronson, the director of government affairs for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, said in a statement that the conservation title in the proposed bill was "robust" and "critical to maintain voluntary, incentive-based land stewardship that helps to sustain rural communities."

Farm safety net

The farm bill stipulates the scope of crop insurance, federal loans, credit and reimbursement programs that are essential to most farming operations.

Both the House version and drafted Senate version of the bill expand crop insurance to cover "losses due to a decline in the market price" of a commodity, where current policy covers only crop losses caused by "drought, flood, or other natural disasters."

National Farmers Union President Rob Larew said while the Senate draft includes "meaningful improvements," it does not fully address the "scale of the crisis" farmers and ranchers are currently facing.

"What we need is a true safety net that moves away from ad hoc assistance, keeps pace with rising production costs and delivers real stability in the marketplace," Larew said in a statement.

Farmers Union called for greater support of "core farm programs" and a disaster relief program that "doesn't require farmers to wait on Congress to act."

The current farm bill proposals both include language that would authorize USDA to issue block grants to states following natural disasters to, as the summary for the Senate draft said, "provide quicker and more regionally suited assistance."

The Agricultural Act of 2026 changes crop insurance policies to be more specific for specialty crop farmers and establishes the Specialty Crop Advisory Committee. The House version also created this additional committee.

National Potato Council CEO Kam Quarles thanked Boozman for the farm bill draft and its language for specialty crop farmers.

"We are hopeful that meaningful discussions will be generated by today's release and result in a broadly supported bill being reported to the Senate floor this summer," Quarles said in a statement. "In particular, we thank the Chairman for recognizing the imperative of specialty crop economic relief and his common-sense framework for delivering vital resources to America's family-owned potato farms."

The Senate draft language also increases farm loans to "better reflect today's cost of doing business" according to a summary of the text, and expands certain credit and loan programs for beginning farmers and fishing industries.

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall said the bill was a "good first draft" and that the farmer group appreciated the bill's improved access to credit, expanded specialty crop investments and fertilizer industry transparency.

"We urge the Senate to quickly pass a bipartisan farm bill, and with the same sense of urgency, Congress must work together to address these additional priorities," Duvall said in a news release. "It's time to deliver solutions to America's farmers and ranchers."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 20 of 84

Hot button issues left out of the draft

Duvall also called for the farm bill to include an economic assistance package for farmers following a "multiyear downturn," legislation to "protect interstate commerce" and to allow the nationwide, year-round sale of E15 fuel.

Previous farm bill drafts have included language on controversial issues like pesticide labeling policies and livestock housing regulations, but the Senate's 2026 farm bill draft does not include either.

Environmental and animal rights groups applauded the omission of language from the Save Our Bacon Act, which would stop state laws from dictating the production standards of agricultural products sold into the state.

Supporters of the Save Our Bacon language, including Farm Bureau, say it protects interstate commerce from a "patchwork" of differing state laws, in particular California's Proposition 12, which stipulated that meat sold in the state must be raised within certain animal confinement provisions.

Language similar to the Save Our Bacon Act was included in the House-passed farm bill.

The environmental group Food & Water Watch commended the Senate bill for not including the anti-Prop 12 language, but the group said the Senate's farm bill "fails to address the root causes" of the food and farm "crisis" in the country.

"After years of skyrocketing food prices, family farm decimation and worsening climate impacts, Congress should use the Farm Bill to build a resilient food system – not double-down on the same corporate model that created these problems in the first place," Food & Water Watch Food Policy Director Rebecca Wolf said in a statement. "We need a fair Farm Bill, not one that continues to prioritize agribusiness profits over farmers, workers, consumers and the planet."

Food & Water Watch was also appreciative that the draft bill did not include a provision to protect pesticide manufacturing companies from certain lawsuits related to pesticide labeling.

The farm bill that advanced from the House Agriculture Committee included pesticide labeling language, but the provision was removed before the bill passed from the House.

Similar language has cropped up in states across the country, including Iowa, where the bill stalled in 2025, and has been supported by Bayer, the maker of the popular herbicide Roundup and the subject of numerous lawsuits alleging the product caused certain types of cancer.

A Thursday ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, however, enforced the strength of federal pesticide labeling and overturned a \$1.25 million Missouri court verdict in which a man alleged that Roundup caused his non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., said he plans to file an amendment to the farm bill that would strip the federal preemption clause used in the court's ruling.

The Senate farm bill draft did not include a provision for the year-round, nationwide sale of E15, a higher blend of ethanol fuel, that farm groups have been calling for with urgency.

Farm groups, however, were encouraged by a letter sent Wednesday by President Donald Trump urging Congress to pass legislation that would permit the nationwide sale of the fuel.

The Senate farm bill proposal also expands USDA Rural Development programs for things like rural broadband access, water treatment infrastructure and economic development.

"America's farmers, ranchers and producers have always answered the call to do more to feed the nation," Boozman said on the Senate floor when introducing the bill. "Farm Bill 2.0 is built to support the backbone of our food system."

The Senate's Agricultural Act of 2026 will be considered and most likely amended in the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry before the bill can head to the full Senate. As of Friday, a committee markup on the bill had not been scheduled.

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

Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

High court issues split decisions on Trump's control of executive board members

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court handed President Donald Trump both a win and a loss Monday in allowing his firing of Federal Trade Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter, but ruling that he cannot remove Lisa Cook from the Federal Reserve's board of governors.

The 6-3 decision in Trump's favor in the Federal Trade Commission case essentially expands the president's authority over agency governing panels, further calling into question which bodies are independent of the executive branch.

The court, split along its familiar ideological divide, held that requiring for-cause removal for political appointees on the FTC's five-member panel is "contrary to the separation of powers enshrined in the Constitution."

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the majority opinion.

"The FTC has the power to promulgate substantive rules carrying the force of law, investigate businesses and enforce statutes through in-house adjudications, and file civil suits on behalf of the United States in federal court," Roberts wrote. "The FTC unquestionably exercises executive power and must therefore be controlled by the Chief Executive."

The decision nullifies the court's 1935 unanimous decision, *Humphrey's Executor v. United States*, which overruled President Franklin D. Roosevelt's removal of William Humphrey from the commission. The framework of the nearly century-old ruling "has not withstood the test of time," Roberts wrote.

"If anything more is left of Humphrey's, the Court overrules it. Humphrey's has for decades been a result in search of a rationale ..." he continued.

Trump hailed the decision in a post on his Truth Social platform Monday.

"To show the importance of the Slaughter Case, 90 years of precedent has been COMPLETELY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY OVERRULED, greatly increasing Presidential Power at a time when it is most needed!" Trump wrote.



Federal Reserve Board member Lisa Cook, left, and Rebecca Slaughter, right, former commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission. (Photos courtesy of Federal Reserve Board and Federal Trade Commission)

Dissent presses for independence

Liberal Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented.

Sotomayor wrote that the structure of executive boards that manage nuclear energy, consumer products and workplace safety, among others, "allows the agencies to address complex problems while enjoying some independence from Presidential removal and thus absolute partisan control."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 22 of 84

Trump fired Slaughter on March 28 in an email that said her "continued service on the FTC is inconsistent with my administration's priorities." Slaughter sued and won in federal district court and at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Slaughter has served as an FTC commissioner since 2018, during Trump's first term. President Joe Biden reappointed her and the Senate unanimously confirmed her for a second term in 2023.

Alvero Bedoya, who served as FTC commissioner under Biden, said the decision reduces the commission to a "little lap dog" for Trump's allies.

Bedoya delivered the remarks during a press call organized by the progressive think tank Groundwork Collaborative.

"The idea that putting the FTC under the direct control of Donald Trump is going to make people's lives easier is laughable, and it is only going to make things worse," Bedoya said. "The only people who are going to be helped by this are this president's billionaire donors who are actively being sued by the Federal Trade Commission."

Bedoya noted the commission is in litigation with Amazon and Meta, whose leaders, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg, each donated \$1 million for Trump's inauguration.

Cook firing disallowed

But the president's power over firing members of governing boards falls short when it comes to the Federal Reserve, and when the targeted appointee is in the midst of a separate legal battle.

In a 5-4 opinion, also delivered by Roberts, the court denied the Trump administration's application to stay a lower court ruling allowing Cook to remain a board governor while litigation plays out.

Trump fired Cook in August 2025 via post on social media after Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Bill Pulte, now Trump's acting head of national intelligence, accused Cook of mortgage fraud.

"The ultimate question of whether the President can remove Cook for cause will depend in part on the underlying facts," Roberts wrote. "In this opinion, we have not addressed the facts, as they have yet to be found or analyzed under the relevant legal standards."

Trump, critics note 'procedural' basis

Trump said the justices sent the case back to the lower court on a "strictly procedural basis."

"We will take appropriate action immediately to make sure that someone who has committed wrongdoing will not be making vital decisions concerning the Welfare of the United States of America!" he wrote on Truth Social.

Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett dissented.

Thomas argued the court's decision violates a president's constitutional powers to remove executive officers at will.

"Cook's office was not her 'property' because, in this country, government officials do not own the public offices in which they serve," Thomas wrote. "Apparent mortgage fraud was a 'cause' to remove Cook. And, the statute authorizing the President to remove Cook for 'cause' says nothing about notice or a hearing, so it does not require notice and a hearing."

Graham Steele, former assistant secretary of financial institutions at the Treasury Department, said during the Groundwork Collaborative call that the decision is "cold comfort."

"It was a 5-4 decision," Steele said. The "majority rests on a narrow set of procedural grounds, and it should have been obvious to members of the court how illegal the president's actions were in trying to remove Governor Cook. And yet this was, to use a technical legal term, 'a squeaker' of a case when it came down to the opinions themselves."

Trump and the Fed

The Cook ruling is a setback in Trump's ongoing interest in exerting influence over the central bank.

The Senate approved Trump's new pick for Fed chair, Kevin Warsh, last month.

Justices heard oral arguments in January over whether Trump overreached his authority in firing Cook. The arguments drew a high-profile appearance of then-Fed Chair Jerome Powell to the court.

Even conservative justices showed skepticism that Trump's social media firing Cook was within his powers

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 23 of 84

under the Federal Reserve Act, which stipulates presidents can only remove board governors “for cause.” Trump claimed his firing of Cook, which accused her of “deceitful and potentially criminal conduct in a financial matter,” was not reviewable in court.

Cook, a Biden appointee, denied any wrongdoing and challenged the termination, arguing that an “unsubstantiated allegation about private mortgage applications,” submitted prior to her Senate confirmation, does not amount to cause for removal.

Cook also argued that Trump denied her due process in not giving her notice or a chance to respond to the allegations.

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

US Supreme Court in Virginia case says police need warrants for cellphone location data

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Monday that law enforcement searches for the location history of cellphones near crime scenes are covered by the Fourth Amendment, requiring warrants to obtain the data.

But the high court left unsettled when searches for the information are reasonable — likely meaning the justices will eventually weigh in again on the privacy rights of Americans in the electronic era.

In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that police officers conducted a search for the purposes of the Fourth Amendment when they obtained cellphone location history data during an investigation into a bank robbery in Virginia. The amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures by the government.

“An individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy in records about his cell phone’s location, and police intrude on that constitutionally protected interest when they demand the information — even though for only a limited time, and from a third-party tech company,” Justice Elena Kagan wrote in the majority opinion.

Kagan was joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Brett Kavanaugh and Ketanji Brown Jackson. Justice Neil Gorsuch concurred in the judgment but did not join the majority opinion.

Justice Samuel Alito dissented, joined by Justices Clarence Thomas and Amy Coney Barrett.



The U.S. Supreme Court on April 9, 2026. (Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 24 of 84

States ask warrants be upheld

Over the past two decades, geofence warrants have become a major tool of law enforcement. At a basic level, they allow police to identify phones within a geographic area for a certain period of time. The data can be tremendously valuable to investigators, offering a way to develop suspects in crimes where their identities aren't otherwise known.

Civil liberties advocates warned that geofence warrants ensnare people in digital dragnets, handing the government data on anyone who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. They argued that accessing data on anyone within a certain area — the geofence — amounts to a general warrant prohibited by the Constitution.

A broad bipartisan coalition of states urged the justices to uphold the warrants. Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia filed a brief with the court arguing that geofence warrants can be more precise than many traditional investigative methods when supported by probable cause and appropriately tailored. In the brief, they urged the justices not to prohibit geofence warrants altogether.

Geofence warrants can generate critical leads when the perpetrators of crimes are otherwise unknown, they wrote. When suspects are unknown but the suspected wrongdoing is linked to a specific place and time, location data provides one of the narrowest available tools for finding leads, the brief argues.

Credit union robbery in Virginia

The case centered on a 2019 robbery of a federal credit union in Midlothian, Virginia. Okello Chatrue was convicted of armed robbery after surveillance footage showed the robber using a cellphone. A detective then obtained a geofence warrant directed at Google for devices within 150 meters of the credit union within an hour of the robbery.

Google initially provided anonymized data in response to the warrant. The detective then requested and received additional location data on nine users. Finally, the detective received de-anonymized information on three users, without obtaining an additional warrant.

While Google has since changed the way it stores location history data to limit geofence warrants, other apps and tech firms collect the data. Lawyers for Chatrue argued that geofence warrants open the door to the authorities requesting information on everyone at a sensitive location — perhaps an abortion clinic or a political convention — at a particular time.

The records serve as a "personal journal of a user's movements," Kagan wrote. Location history resembles other private materials like emails, documents, photos and calendars that, even if stored on Google's servers, users reasonably view as their own, she wrote. Users, in turn, expect the data to be shielded from the "inquisitive eyes" of the government, Kagan wrote.

'Reasonable' question unanswered

But Kagan and the court's majority didn't wade into whether the search of Chatrue was reasonable under the Fourth Amendment. While the warrant in the case was an uncommon, multi-step warrant, Kagan wrote, the lower appeals court found that a search did not occur, so it did not decide whether the warrant was reasonable.

"We are, as we have said many times before, 'a court of review, not of first view,'" Kagan wrote. "It is therefore now up to the Court of Appeals to decide whether, at each step of the search process, the warrant satisfied the Fourth Amendment's requirements of particularity and probable cause."

In his dissent, Alito wrote that the Supreme Court's decision "further destabilizes" longstanding jurisprudence on the Fourth Amendment. He accused the majority of issuing an advisory opinion by not addressing whether the search of Chatrue's data was reasonable.

"Indeed, by refusing to review the one question that could have at least theoretically given Chatrue some hope of relief, the Court carefully set the stage for its planned performance: striking a pose as a great champion of privacy in the digital age. I cannot support this irresponsible escapade," Alito wrote.

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

US Supreme Court deals blow to Trump, ruling states can accept ballots after Election Day

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Monday that states can count mail-in ballots that arrive after Election Day, a blow to the Trump administration and some Republican states that had urged the justices to require all ballots to arrive by the close of polls.

In a 5-4 decision, the court found that federal law does not prevent states from accepting late-arriving ballots. The ruling is a victory for Democrats and voting rights advocates, who had said setting a hard, Election Day deadline for ballot arrival would risk disenfranchising voters amid fears of deteriorating mail service.

The case, *RNC vs. Watson*, centered on whether federal law overrides a Mississippi law that requires mail-in ballots postmarked on or before Election Day to be counted as long as they arrive within five business days of the election. Thirteen states have similar laws, which extend a "grace period" to ballots that arrive through the mail after polls close.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett, writing for the majority, said that federal law didn't preempt the state law because elections represent when voters make a decision, which must be done on or before Election Day. Voters who cast their ballot by mail have made a decision by Election Day, Barrett reasoned.

"The electorate's choice is made when voting is complete, not when ballots are received," Barrett wrote.

Barrett cautioned that the decision rested on the interpretation of federal law, not the U.S. Constitution. She noted that the court was not considering the scope of Congress' authority to regulate federal elections — suggesting that if Congress passes a nationwide ballot arrival deadline that the justices might uphold such a law.

Barrett was joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Justice Samuel Alito dissented, joined by Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch. Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined part of the dissent.

"If ballots received after election day are added to the set of ballots that dictate the election's outcome, the electorate's choice does not occur on election day, and the federal election-day statutes are violated," Alito wrote.



Greg Lange of Bismarck, North Dakota, drops off his absentee ballot and his wife's at the Bismarck Burleigh County Office Building on June 8, 2026. (Photo by Michael Achterling/North Dakota Monitor)

States with grace periods

In addition to Mississippi, other states with some form of grace period include Alaska, California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia.

David Becker, executive director of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research, called the Supreme Court decision a win for these states, as well as 30 states that accept military and overseas

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 26 of 84

ballots delivered after Election Day.

"This is a victory for all the states and for all those who respect the will of the Founders, who ensured the security of our elections by giving the power to run those elections to the states — not to one person sitting in Washington, DC," Becker said in a statement.

Some local election officials had warned that requiring all ballots to be received by the close of polls would burden their offices as they try to quickly warn voters about the change just months before the midterms. More ballot drop boxes that let voters keep their ballots out of the mail could help, they say, but also cost money.

"Ultimately, the voters may be harmed as well," election officials in California, Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington wrote in a court brief, warning that some ballots may not be received in time, "despite best efforts by careful and proactive administrators and local governments."

But some Republican secretaries of state had urged the justices to strike down "grace period" laws. Louisiana Secretary of State Nancy Landry and Wyoming Secretary of State Chuck Gray wrote in a court brief that an Election Day deadline "provides the bright-line rule that effective election administration demands."

At least 725,000 ballots were postmarked by Election Day 2024 and arrived within a legally accepted post-election window, The New York Times has reported, citing election officials in 14 of 22 states and territories where late-arriving ballots were accepted that year.

Overall, about 30% of voters cast a mail ballot in 2024, according to data gathered by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

RNC challenged law

The Republican National Committee challenged the Mississippi law, which was defended by Mississippi Republican Secretary of State Michael Watson. The RNC argued a longstanding federal law that sets the Tuesday after the first Monday in November as Election Day for federal offices preempted state laws that allow ballots cast by Election Day, but received later, to count.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in October 2024 that federal law requires ballots to be received by Election Day. President Donald Trump last year also unilaterally attempted to require mail ballots to be received by the end of Election Day in a sweeping executive order on elections. Much of that order was blocked in federal court.

The Supreme Court "rejected the RNC's radical attempt to rewrite election laws in a way that would have resulted in the rejection of hundreds of thousands of ballots and the disenfranchisement of voters nationwide through no fault of their own," Elisabeth Frost, litigation chair at Elias Law Group, said in a statement.

Elias Law Group represented two nonprofit voting rights groups, Vet Voice Foundation and the Mississippi Alliance for Retired Americans, that had intervened as defendants in the case.

The Supreme Court issued Monday's decision against a backdrop of uncertainty surrounding mail ballots. Trump signed an executive order in March that would restrict voting by mail by requiring states to provide lists of possible mail ballot voters to the U.S. Postal Service in advance. A federal judge recently blocked major portions of the order, triggering a near-certain appeal.

Republican National Committee chairman Joe Gruters accused Democrats of inviting chaos by allowing elections to "drag on" for days and weeks after ballots are cast. He said Republicans wouldn't be deterred by the decision.

"If we want fair and secure elections, Election Day should mean exactly what it says, which is why this decision makes it even more imperative that Congress pass the SAVE America Act," Gruters said in a statement, referring to restrictive voter legislation pushed by Trump that lacks the votes to pass the U.S. Senate.

Trump said the decision was a "tremendous loss" in a social media post and again urged passage of the SAVE America Act.

Paul Clement, an attorney for the Republican National Committee, said during oral arguments at the Supreme Court in March the prospect that the outcome of an election could change because of ballots arriving after Election Day would be unacceptable to losing candidates. After the 2020 election, President

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 27 of 84

Donald Trump demanded election officials not count ballots that came in after Election Day, but states kept counting ballots.

"If you have an election and the election is going to turn on late-arriving ballots in a way that means what everybody kind of thought was the result on Election Day ends up being the opposite a week later, 21 days later, the losers are not going to accept that result. Full stop," Clement told the justices.

Attorneys for Watson argued that both legal and historical precedent supported his position. States may decide that voters have made their final choices when ballots are submitted to state officials rather than when they're received, according to Watson.

Watson didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

This is a developing report that will be updated.

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

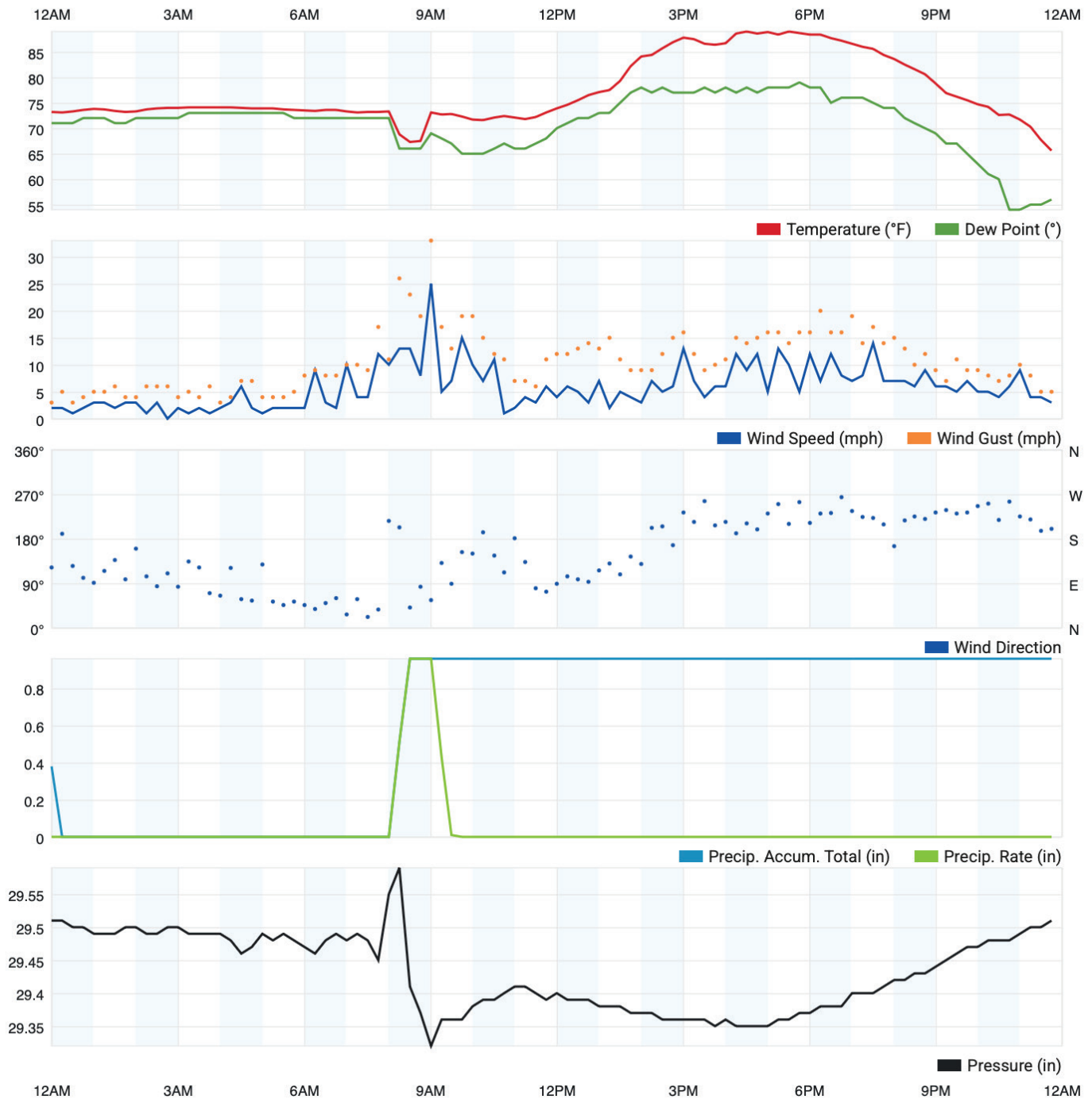
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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 28 of 84

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 29, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 29 of 84

Today



High: 86 °F

Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy

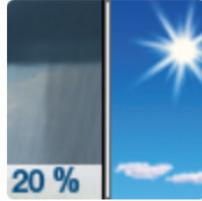
Tonight



Low: 60 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Wednesday



High: 88 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 93 °F

Sunny then
Slight Chance
T-storms

Today

Mid/Upper 80s



Mid/Upper 80s

Wednesday

Thursday

Upper 80s/Low 90s



Upper 80s/Low 90s

Friday

Saturday

Mid/Upper 80s



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
June 30, 2026 1:49 AM



Dry and warm for today, however a couple of weak systems for the latter half of the week going into the weekend means increasing chances for storms. Temperatures will be warming up with an uptick of humidity as well.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 30 of 84

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

3 PM to 8 PM CDT
Wednesday

PRIMARY THREATS

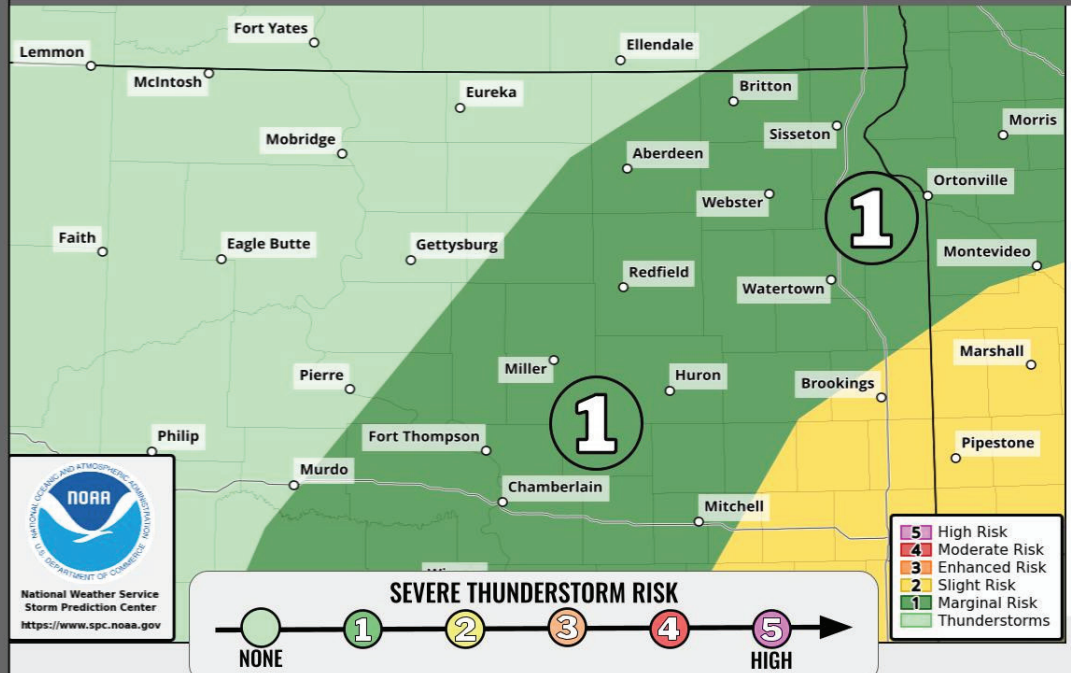


DAMAGING
WIND
GUSTS
of 60 mph



LARGE HAIL
of 1.5" in
diameter

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Wednesday



Two rounds of storms are expected Wednesday. One round in the early morning hours (about 3 am through 7 am) comes with a low risk of severe weather for central and northeast South Dakota. Afternoon storms come with the additional risk for a more broader area.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 31 of 84

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89 °F at 4:28 PM

Low Temp: 66 °F at 8:23 AM

Wind: 35 mph at 9:03 AM

Precip: 0.96

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1931

Record Low: 38 in 1918

Average High: 84

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.76

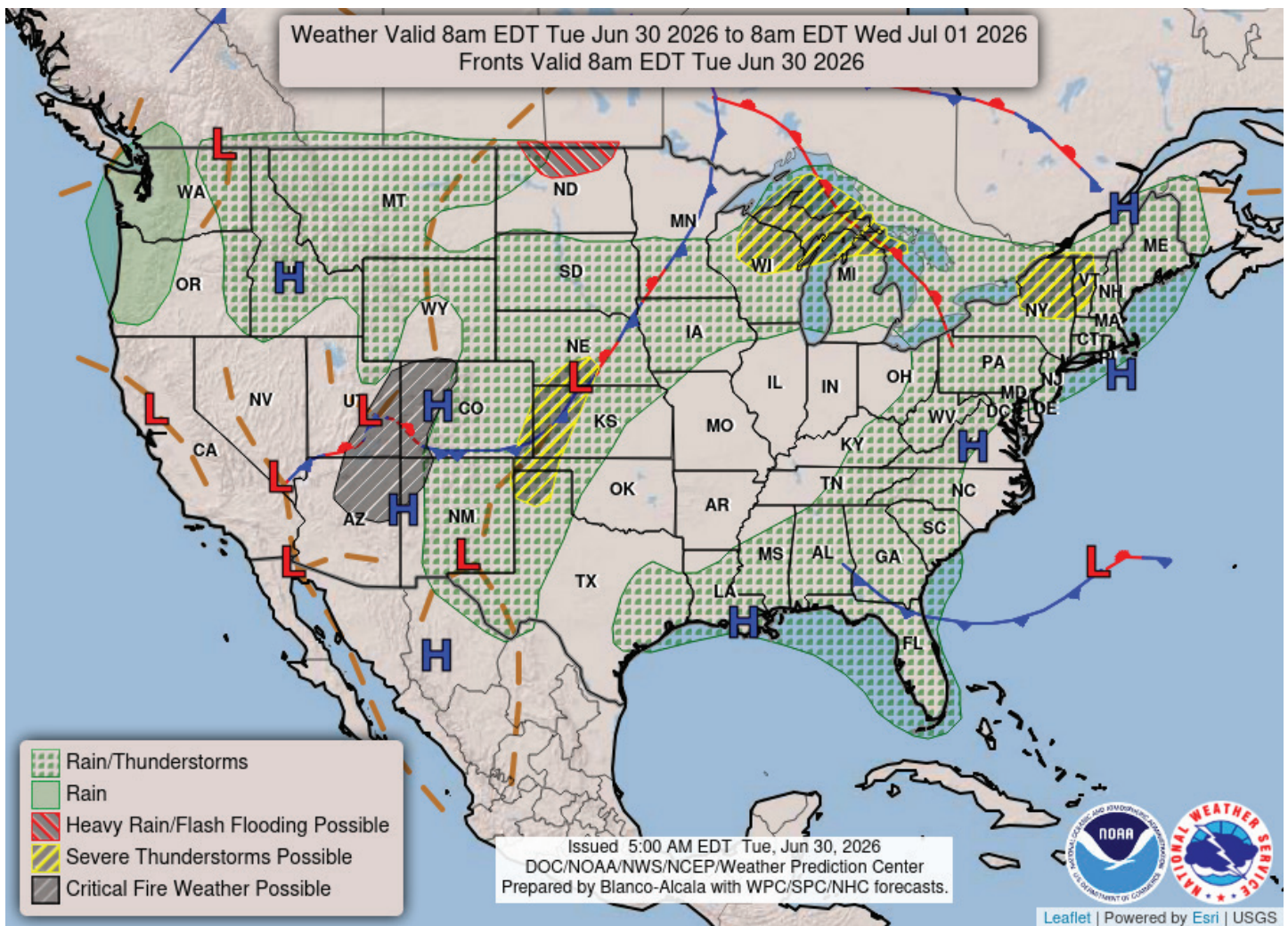
Precip to date in June.: 2.71

Average Precip to date: 11.01

Precip Year to Date: 9.47

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:47 am



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 32 of 84

Today in Weather History

June 30, 1991: Thunderstorms dropped over 2 inches of rain over Brown, Marshall, and Roberts County. The rain washed out many county roads and flooded low-lying areas. Several streets were impassable in Aberdeen. Officially, Aberdeen recorded 1.91 inches of rain.

June 30, 1992: An F2 tornado lifted a roof off a house 18 miles east of Pierre. A barn was destroyed, and power lines and trees were downed. Also, an estimated wind gust of 61 mph was observed 5 miles west of Miller in Hand County.

1792: The first recorded tornado in Canadian history struck the Niagara Peninsula between Foothill and Port Robinson, leveling some houses and uprooting trees between the communities.

1886 — The second destructive hurricane in nine days hit the Apalachicola-Tallahassee area. (David Ludlum)

1900: The combination of high winds and the presence of wooded fuel-filled cargo helped to spread fire on the Hoboken Docks in New Jersey. The fire began when cotton bales caught fire and spread to nearby volatile liquids. The fire killed at least 300 people and was seen in New York City.

1912: An estimated F4 tornado ripped through Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada on this day. The storm became the deadliest tornado in Canada's history as it killed 28 people along a rare, 18.5-mile track from south to north.

1942 — The temperature at Portland, OR, hit 102 degrees, an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1972 — The entire state of Pennsylvania was declared a disaster area as a result of the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes, which claimed 48 lives, and caused 2.1 billion dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Hot weather prevailed in the Pacific Northwest, with readings above 100 degrees reported as far north as southern British Columbia. Yakima, WA, reported a record high of 100 degrees, while temperatures near the Washington coast hovered near 60 degrees all day. Thunderstorms prevailed from southwest Texas to New England. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph at Gettysburg, PA, killed one person. High winds and large hail caused more than five million dollars damage to property and crops in Lancaster County, PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms in eastern Kansas drenched Worden with 12.21 inches of rain, and a wall of water two to four feet deep swept through Lone Star, KS, flooding every home in the town. Up to ten inches of rain was reported southeast of Callaway, NE. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Winfield, KS. Seventeen cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 36 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Winnfield, LA, reported 22.52 inches of rain in three days, and more than thirty inches for the month, a record for June. Shreveport LA received a record 17.11 inches in June, with a total for the first six months of the year of 45.55 inches. Thunderstorms also helped produce record rainfall totals for the month of June of 13.12 inches at Birmingham AL, 14.66 inches at Oklahoma City, OK, 17.41 inches at Tallahassee FL, 9.97 inches at Lynchburg, VA, and more than 10.25 inches at Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh had also experienced a record wet month of May. (The National Weather Summary)

1999: Mount Baker, Washington closed out a record snowfall season both for the United States and the verifiable world record as the seasonal total from July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999, finished with 1,140 inches.



Releasing the Holy Spirit's Power

**God's power flows when we recognize our need,
surrender our control, and step out in faith**

Romans 8:26-27: 26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

God's Spirit indwells believers at salvation, which means His power is available from that moment (Ephesians 1:13). But how do we actually access and experience that power in daily life?

First, acknowledge the need. We must accept that in and of ourselves, we are powerless to live out God's will. No matter how capable, smart, or strong we may be, our own resources are insufficient for the Christian life.

Second, surrender completely. This means we're to give the Holy Spirit full authority over every area of life—not just our "spiritual" activities but also our vocation, finances, family, and relationships. The Spirit won't release supernatural power into a life that's holding back or continuing in rebellion.

Third, exercise faith. In other words, actively trust God instead of just mentally agreeing with Him. Faith is what releases the Spirit's power. It's as if we're saying, "I believe You have a plan, God, so I'm trusting You to give me what I need to do Your will." When you step out in faith, He will provide for every need.

But don't just memorize these steps—live them. Always remind yourself, I can't, but God can. His plans are for my good and His glory. That's the kind of life that overflows with the Holy Spirit's power.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 34 of 84

The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.29.26

4 25 26 31 36 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 25 Mins 40
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.26

5 13 30 33 52 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$511,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 10 Mins 40
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.29.26

8 13 29 30 31 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$31,160,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 25
Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.27.26

2 21 25 30 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$157,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 40
Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.29.26

2 9 24 25 39 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 9
Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.29.26

10 14 41 53 59 3

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$375,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 9
Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

By the numbers: Spain's mass legalization for immigrants

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Around 1 million immigrants in Spain have sought to legalize their status after the Southern European nation launched a measure earlier this year to integrate foreigners living and working in the country without authorization.

The window to apply for the program, which was announced in January and kicked off in April, was set to close Tuesday.

It offers immigrants without legal status a one-year, renewable residence permit if they have spent five months living in the country and have a clean criminal record.

Here's a look at the immigration measure by the numbers.

900,000

That's how many applications the Spanish government had received as of June 12 from immigrants seeking work and residency permits under the temporary program.

The government originally estimated about 500,000 foreigners living in Spain without authorization could benefit, but think tanks and the Spanish police placed the estimate closer to a million people.

Immigration experts and analysts expect the final tally to easily exceed a million applicants.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, one of Europe's prominent progressive leaders, called the measure "an act of justice and a necessity," arguing that people already living and working in Spain should "do so under equal conditions" and pay taxes.

The policy contrasts starkly with ratcheted-up deportation efforts taking place in other parts of the European Union and in the United States.

360,000

The government's estimate of how many applications were successfully processed by mid June, with applicants set to receive temporary residence and work permits. The final numbers will be higher, as the government has three months to process all applications submitted by June 30.

30%

The share of applicants who are Colombian nationals. Colombians represent one of the largest immigrant groups in Spain, with upward of 980,000 Colombian-born nationals living in the country, according to the National Statistics Institute.

Moroccan nationals made up 14% of applicants, followed by Venezuelans at 10% and Peruvians at 9%, the government said.

Key sectors of the Spanish economy, including agriculture, tourism and the service sector, depend on immigrants from Latin America and Africa.

1 in 5

Spanish residents who were born outside the country. Spain's population has grown considerably in recent decades, with around 10 million people in the country of 50 million having been born elsewhere.

Many are from Colombia, Venezuela and Morocco, having fled violence or political instability, or seeking better economic opportunities.

6

The number of times Spain has previously undertaken mass legalization measures for immigrants living and working illegally in the country.

The first three times were under Socialist Party Prime Minister Felipe González starting in 1986, but conservative leader José Aznar's government also oversaw two such measures in the 2000s.

This time around, many more immigrants have applied. In the 2005 measure, the previous largest such instance, 576,500 immigrants had their status legalized. That invited intense public debate and scrutiny in the country.

Monaco explosion injures 3 including Ukrainian tycoon, as suspect flees to France

By PHILIPPE MAGONI and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

MONACO (AP) — Monaco's chief prosecutor said Tuesday that the suspect who placed an explosive device that injured three people, including a reported Ukrainian tycoon, acted alone and remains at large.

Police in the principality have opened an attempted murder investigation into Monday's incident but aren't qualifying it as a terrorism investigation, Prosecutor Stephane Thibault told reporters. The motive remains unclear.

One of the three injured is a woman in life-threatening condition, he said. The other is a man who is no longer in life-threatening condition and a child whose life isn't in danger, he said. He didn't provide their identities.

The suspected attacker fled into neighboring France, authorities have said.

Media reports identified Ukrainian construction tycoon Vadym Yermolaiev as being among the injured. Ukrainian news site Ukrainska Pravda said he was targeted by Ukrainian sanctions in 2023 for ties to Russia.

The injured woman is being treated at a hospital in Nice, Christophe Mirmand, the minister of state for Monaco, told French news broadcaster LCI on Tuesday. Her partner and a 13-year-old child suffered less severe injuries but remain at hospital, he added.

The explosion occurred around 9 p.m. on Monday at the entrance of a residence near the French border.

Law enforcement officers were deployed Tuesday morning in Monaco and the surrounding area. French and Monaco authorities are searching for an unidentified suspect, whose motive is under investigation, authorities said.

The three victims were "apparently returning home peacefully" in the early evening, according to surveillance footage, Mirmand said. "They were caught in the explosion as they crossed the threshold of their apartment building," he said.

The victims are "regular" residents of Monaco, but authorities do not yet know whether the family had been threatened in the past, Mirmand said.

"It appears that the family was specifically targeted," he emphasized, noting that the alleged perpetrator "had walked around the area several times while waiting for the victims," according to surveillance footage. "In the minutes before the explosion, he was apparently waiting for the victims."

The attack has shocked the elite principality on the Mediterranean Coast. Monaco's Prince Albert II described it as "an odious act" and said all the country's services were mobilized to ensure security.

A French national police official said a search is underway for the suspect.

Yermolaiev, a Ukrainian-born businessman originally from the city of Dnipro, built his fortune through the Alef Group, a diversified holding with interests including commercial real estate, manufacturing and agriculture. He became one of the country's best-known property developers, leading projects that reshaped parts of Dnipro's city center, and has regularly appeared in rankings of Ukraine's wealthiest businesspeople.

In an interview with Forbes Ukraine, Yermolaiev said he renounced his Ukrainian citizenship and became a Cypriot citizen in 2017.

In December 2023, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy imposed sanctions on Yermolaiev as part of a broader package targeting individuals and companies Kyiv said had business links to Russia or Russian-occupied territories.

A coastal playground for the rich and famous, Monaco is renowned as much for its tax-friendly incentives and Formula 1 Grand Prix as its glamorous royal family. The small principality is widely regarded as one of the safest places in the world, including through its extensive surveillance network composed of thousands of CCTV cameras covering most public spaces.

Monaco's population of 38,000 is multinational, with only a fifth of the population actually citizens of the principality.

Pope issues last-ditch appeal, begs breakaway traditionalist group to back off bishop consecrations

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Leo XIV on Tuesday begged a breakaway group of traditionalist Catholics to call off its plan to consecrate new bishops without his consent, calling the move a schismatic act and a “sin of extreme gravity.”

“I plead with you and ask you with all my heart: please turn back!” Leo wrote in a letter to the Rev. Davide Pagliarani, the superior of the Society of St. Pius X.

Leo issued the last-ditch appeal a day before the society plans to consecrate four new bishops at its seminary in Ecône, Switzerland. Under church law, the consecrations constitute a schismatic act, or an intentional rupture of the unity of the Catholic Church, and incur automatic excommunication for the four bishops and the bishop administering the consecration.

The ceremony poses the first major crisis for the American pope, who has stressed the need for church unity since the start of his pontificate. He has worked especially hard to heal tensions with traditionalist Catholics who prefer the old Latin Mass, that worsened in some ways during the Pope Francis pontificate.

The society, known as the SSPX, was founded in opposition to the modernizing reforms of the 1960s Second Vatican Council. Among other things, the council revolutionized the Catholic Church’s relations with other religions and the laity, and allowed Mass to be celebrated in vernacular languages rather than Latin.

Its members celebrate the ancient Latin Mass and have accused the modern church of being rife with heresies and errors. The society insists that only the SSPX is upholding the true faith of Christ and has justified the consecrations, citing a “state of necessity” to minister to its faithful.

In 1988, SSPX founder Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without papal consent. The Vatican promptly excommunicated Lefebvre and the four other bishops, and the group today still has no legal status in the church.

The Vatican in 2009 lifted those original excommunications as part of its outreach to try to bring the group back under its wing. But the Vatican has warned that a similar fate awaits the new bishops if Wednesday’s consecrations go ahead.

In his letter, Leo repeated the Vatican’s offer of dialogue and said that going through with the consecrations would be counterproductive for the SSPX faithful.

“I urge you to consider carefully the spiritual good of the faithful, because the schismatic act you are about to undertake would deprive them of the licit, and in some cases, even valid reception of the sacraments,” he wrote.

Despite the original 1988 schismatic act, the group has continued to grow and today poses a threat to the Holy See as a parallel, ultra-Catholic, pre-Vatican II church. The SSPX counts two bishops, 751 priests, 264 seminarians, 145 religious brothers, 88 oblates and 250 religious sisters representing 50 nationalities, according to SSPX statistics.

Who flies the American flag for holidays — and who never flies one, according to an AP-NORC poll

By COREY WILLIAMS, LINLEY SANDERS and SIMRAN PARWANI Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Jerry Esters proudly displays the American flag each day on his Detroit home. A few miles away, Yvonne Pistoichini says there is no scenario under which she would allow the Stars and Stripes to cast its shadow where she lives.

Both are Black.

For Esters, the flag represents the opportunities that allowed the great-great-grandson of slaves to find success and flourish. Pistoichini, 79, simply says the America identified by the flag is not the same country she saw growing up.

Americans’ views of “Old Glory” are divided by politics, age and race, according to a new survey con-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 39 of 84

ducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research ahead of the nation's 250th birthday celebration.

Republicans and older, white adults are especially likely to say they fly the American flag, while younger Democrats and Black adults are more likely to say they don't fly it. Views of the flag — and whether it's a unifying or divisive symbol — track with other deep divisions among Americans, who see their country's history and accomplishments very differently.

"A lot of Black Americans see the flag as a symbol of both inclusion and exclusion," said Matthew Delmont, professor of American history at Dartmouth College. "Black Americans, more so than white Americans, also understand the flag can be used to justify a version of patriotism that is rooted in exclusion, with the flag being used to say 'you don't belong here.'"

The survey of 2,596 adults was conducted April 16-20. It suggests that older white Americans, especially Republicans, are more likely to see the flag as unifying.

About half of U.S. adults said they display the flag at home throughout most of the year, or during holidays. About 7 in 10 Republicans and about 6 in 10 Americans ages 60 and older fly the flag at least during holidays.

About 6 in 10 Democrats and independents, on the other hand, say they "never" fly the U.S. flag. That includes the vast majority, 75%, of Democrats under 45.

Opportunities worth fighting for

Esters, a 64-year-old retired clay sculptor for a Detroit automaker, flies three American flags at his Sherwood Forest home on the city's west side.

"When these homes were built, Black men like me, my mother and my family ... we couldn't even buy these homes," he said. "To me, that's one reason I fly the flag. We went through a lot to be able to own nice homes, and this is what we fought for."

The other reason is Moriah Martin, Esters' great-great-grandmother, who was born into slavery.

"I'm kind of living out her dreams — what I did for a living, having a business, having a nice home," he said. "I think that's the American way, but we got to fight for it and we, as Blacks, fought for it."

He's in the minority among Black adults, according to the survey, which found that only about 3 in 10 Black adults say they ever display the American flag, compared with about half of white and Hispanic adults.

Pistochini says current divisions over political leanings and perspectives, and inequality of opportunities for the poor and people of color are not what she believes the flag should stand for. People confuse flying it with being patriotic, she added.

"Just because you fly a flag doesn't make you a patriot," Pistochini said. "If there was patriotism, we would not have all this. We can't look at (what's going on) and say this is America."

For country and freedom

Ben Gaskins, chair of political science at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, says the flag is an important symbol of patriotism for many Americans.

"It is those who are older people, who are white and people who are more conservative," Gaskins said. "They take it as more central to their identity."

Nancy Hansen, a 73-year-old retired Customs and Border Protection clerk in Culvertson, Montana, believes "you have to be for the country, no matter what" and that the flag means "freedom."

"Freedom to live where we want to live, travel where we want to travel, raise our kids where we want to raise our kids," said Hansen, who is white and identifies as Republican.

Each year around July 4, the American Legion posts flags outside businesses and homes in Culvertson, including Hansen's home.

Linda and Greg Cunningham also equate the flag with freedom.

The white, conservative Pontiac, Michigan, couple are going all out this summer. The exterior of their home northwest of Detroit is awash in red, white and blue. The flag sits atop a flagpole just feet from their door.

"It's no political thing, at all," said Linda Cunningham, 63. "It's our freedom. I love the American flag."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 40 of 84

I love the whole concept of it. I love America. I know there's so much going on in the world, right now, and I know everyone has their own views, and I'm just sad that politics have to be brought into the flag."

Flag as a 'painful reminder'

Of those who took the survey, 47% see the flag as a "more unifying" symbol. About 16% call it a "more divisive" icon, while 36% say it's neither divisive nor unifying.

Only 22% of Black adults see the flag as a unifying symbol, compared with 55% of white adults and 42% of Hispanic adults.

"It's a painful symbol. It's a reminder of what we could be and how it's failed to live up to that for Black people, for Indigenous people and people of color," said Allison Wiltz, a Black author and founder of Writers and Editors of Color.

Paul Walthour, 71, occasionally flies the flag outside his Minneapolis-area home on special occasions and some holidays. Walthour says that when he's away from home and at his cabin, the flag goes up each morning and is taken down at the end of the day.

"This is antiquated, perhaps," said Walthour, who is white and a retired advertising agency creative director. "I feel it's a symbol that you're proud to be an American."

"Unfortunately, I kind of think it's kind of a symbol of dividing more than uniting," added Walthour, who identifies as a Democrat. "The people who fly it on the far right have one kind of feeling about it, and the people who fly it on the left have a different kind of feeling about it."

World shares follow Wall Street higher, while the Japanese yen hits a 39-year low against the dollar

By CHAN HO-HIM and ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writers

HONG KONG (AP) — Markets in Europe and Asia were mostly higher on Tuesday, tracking Wall Street gains, while the Japanese yen was trading near a 40-year low against the U.S. dollar.

U.S. futures were little changed.

In Germany, the DAX climbed 0.8% to 24,810.48 while the CAC 40 in Paris edged 0.1% higher to 8,374.80. Britain's FTSE 100 picked up 0.4% to 10,524.33.

Shares in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan rebounded from earlier losses spurred by selling of technology companies due to concerns over the sustainability of the boom in artificial intelligence.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 was up 0.9% to 70,062.32. Chip equipment maker Tokyo Electron jumped 3.3%. SoftBank Group, an investment holding company that invests in OpenAI, was up 1.2%.

South Korea's Kospi index, which has performed strongly during the global AI frenzy due to growing demand for memory chips from major chipmakers like SK Hynix, gained 1% to 8,476.48.

Shares of Samsung Electronics rose 3.4% and those of SK Hynix rose 0.8% after the two companies and the government jointly announced plans Monday for over \$500 billion of investments in the country's chipmaking and AI.

Elsewhere in Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.6% to 22,881.02 and the Shanghai Composite index rose 0.5% to 4,094.40. Taiwan's Taiex picked up 2.5%.

China reported its factory activity slightly picked up pace in June, mainly due to exports and demand generated by expanding use of AI. The survey released by the National Bureau of Statistics said the manufacturing purchasing managers index, or PMI, expanded to 50.3 in June from 50 in May. That's better than had been expected.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dropped 0.5% to 8,778.70, while India's Sensex slipped 0.3%.

The dollar rose to nearly 162.42 yen early Tuesday in Tokyo, its highest level since late 1986, and was trading at 162.40 yen by late afternoon.

The yen's prolonged slump against the dollar, largely due to a growing gap between interest rates in the U.S. and Japan, has spurred speculation that Tokyo might intervene to prop up the currency. However, Japan's finance minister said only that the government was ready to "respond appropriately whenever

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 41 of 84

necessary.”

Earlier interventions appeared only to slow the dollar’s rise against the yen.

The Federal Reserve is expected to keep interest rates higher for longer due to inflationary pressures partly driven by higher oil and gas prices resulting from the Iran war. Japan’s central bank is moving very gradually to raise interest rates from near zero, having increased its key rate to 1% last month, its highest level in more than 30 years.

The dollar to yen rate “has spiked above 162 as everyone is holding their breath to see when Japanese officials intervene,” Ipek Ozkardeskaya of Swissquote said in a commentary. “Intervening now would change nothing about the underlying market direction, but would cost dearly. Unless we see an aggressive sell-off in the yen, the Japanese authorities seem willing to remain on the sidelines.”

The euro fell to \$1.1409 from \$1.1422.

U.S. futures edged higher.

On Monday, Wall Street’s benchmark S&P 500 added 1.2%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 2.1%.

High tech companies led gains as Intel gained 2.7% and Micron Technology climbed 1.1%. Nvidia rose 1.3% and AMD, or Advanced Micro Devices, was 3.4% higher.

Oil prices fell modestly early Tuesday as traders monitored developments in negotiations between the U.S. and Iran on ending their four-month war.

Crude prices have stabilized following attacks across the Persian Gulf over the weekend after the United States and Iran separately announced they will send delegations to Qatar this week, though Tehran insisted it has not agreed to meet with the United States “at any level.”

Brent crude, the international standard, fell 0.7% to \$73.40 a barrel. It was trading near \$72 per barrel before the war began to disrupt transport of oil and gas through the Strait of Hormuz.

Benchmark U.S. crude declined 0.8% to \$70.22 a barrel.

The hope is that an end to the war with Iran will restore full access to the strait, allowing tankers to exit the Persian Gulf and deliver crude to customers worldwide. That would help lower the price of oil, whose jumps because of the war have sent a punishing wave of inflation around the world.

Self-exiled Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui gets 30 years in US prison for fraud conviction

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A self-exiled billionaire Chinese business tycoon once believed to be among China’s wealthiest men was sentenced Monday to 30 years in a U.S. prison for a massive financial fraud that a federal judge said cost over 1,000 people worldwide hundreds of millions of dollars.

Guo Wengui, who fled China a decade ago and reinvented himself as a U.S.-based Communist Party critic, was sentenced in a Manhattan courtroom packed with his supporters by Judge Analisa Torres. She said he “preyed on those seeking to bring Democracy to China,” taking their money so he could live lavishly.

Before he was sentenced, Guo protested his treatment in jail, saying he was taken to the hospital early Monday. He disputed a prosecutor’s portrayal of him as a malingerer faking illness, saying he repeatedly vomited as he was returned to jail before being brought to court.

“When I came here, I said: ‘I have a tummy ache, I need to go to the bathroom, I don’t feel well,’” Guo said through an interpreter of his courthouse arrival. Later, Guo wiped his mouth repeatedly with a tissue.

He only briefly addressed the criminal case, defending his intentions by saying in reference to the Chinese Communist Party: “The reason I came to the U.S. was to destroy the CCP.”

The judge, in sentencing him, read snippets of letters she received from victims who described losing their life savings and feeling severely anxious and shamed and having family members turn on them for their poor investment choice.

Torres said Guo “takes no responsibility for his actions and instead insists incredibly his conduct caused no loss and harmed no one.” She said he “has called upon supporters to harass and intimidate those who

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 42 of 84

dare to speak out against him.”

The judge ordered Guo to forfeit \$889 million in restitution.

Wei Chen, a victim who testified at trial, told Torres that Guo’s fraud “destroyed my life” and that of her family.

As Guo left the courtroom after the sentencing, supporters applauded and shouted toward him.

Before his arrest and detention without bail three years ago, Guo grew so close to conservative political strategist Steve Bannon that they announced a joint initiative to overthrow the Chinese government in 2020. He lived in a luxury apartment overlooking Central Park and had joined President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Florida golf club.

Prosecutors had requested he serve at least 30 years in prison, saying his “astonishing” fraud from 2018 to 2023 “destroyed hundreds of lives” and left “a wreckage of victims and families who have been devastated financially, emotionally, and psychologically.”

Prosecutors said in court papers that his ill-gotten riches fueled “a lifestyle of extraordinary excess and indulgence, a gilded life of mansions, yachts, race cars, designer clothes and luxury furnishings.”

Guo was convicted of nine of 12 criminal charges during a seven-week trial that prosecutors said showcased his deception of thousands of investors in bogus deals that enabled Guo’s lavish lifestyle.

In a court filing, Guo’s lawyers wrote that he was the victim of the Chinese Communist Party’s “grand, pervasive, and life threatening” pursuit of him. They alleged that the party recruited elites in U.S. business, entertainment and politics to conspire against him.

They said in presentence court papers that a lengthy prison term would only validate China’s smear campaign and “embolden further efforts to eliminate Chinese dissidents from public life” while defendants in similar cases received prison terms of two-to-four years.

The lawyers noted that a court probation officer wrote to the sentencing judge that Guo, also known as Miles Guo and Ho Wan Kwok, had scars and disfigurements from physical torture he endured in China and subsequent surgeries he underwent from 1993 to 2022 to repair the injuries.

Defense lawyers said Guo’s wealth grew as his family became the largest shareholder of China’s largest publicly traded securities company, but he became a target of Chinese government officials as he exposed them as corrupt. Eventually, the lawyers wrote, Guo moved to Hong Kong, London and then New York in 2017.

Chinese authorities accused him of rape, kidnapping, bribery and other crimes, but Guo said those allegations were false.

On Monday, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said they had noted the sentencing, and that Guo is wanted by the Chinese government and has an Interpol “Red Notice” on him. The notice is a request to police forces around the world to arrest a suspect, pending extradition.

Prosecutors say Guo convinced hundreds of thousands of people to invest more than \$1 billion total in entities he controlled, including his media company, GTV Media Group Inc., and his so-called Himalaya Farm Alliance and the Himalaya Exchange.

Guo, the government alleged in presentence court papers, was “entirely unrepentant” for his crimes after he took advantage of lax U.S. asylum laws to flourish in America.

He survived 2 natural disasters in Venezuela’s La Guaira. Now he vows never to return

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

Venezuelan merchant Grian Serrano has survived two of the country’s worst natural disasters: the devastating 1999 mudslides that ravaged the coastal state of La Guaira and, 26 years later, two powerful earthquakes that struck the same region.

Bruised around his left eye and across much of his body, 46-year-old Serrano is recovering from the ordeal he endured with his son and mother Wednesday.

The three were buried beneath rubble and twisted steel when their eight-story apartment building col-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 43 of 84

lapsed in the city of Caraballeda in La Guaira, the state hardest hit by the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 earthquakes. "It is a miracle from God," Serrano said as he recalled how, in total darkness, he clawed through debris with his bare hands before rescuing his 8-year-old son and 69-year-old mother with the help of two passersby.

The two earthquakes have killed more than 1,700 people and injured more than 5,000, according to the government. Hundreds of buildings collapsed or were damaged, primarily in La Guaira. Significant damage was also reported in the capital, Caracas, and in the states of Carabobo, Miranda, Aragua and Yaracuy.

La Guaira — known as Vargas until 2019 — is Venezuela's second-smallest state but one of its most strategically important. About 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Caracas, it is home to the country's main international airport and second-largest seaport.

Its roughly 440,000 residents are largely low-income and depend on tourism, commerce and jobs tied to the airport and seaport.

Speaking from his brother's home in Caracas, Serrano recalled the terror he felt last week, his thoughts inevitably returning to Dec. 15, 1999, when he was jolted awake by the screams of their household employee, who had seen a nearby river overflow after days of heavy rain.

From his window, he watched the swollen river sweep away trees, massive boulders and vehicles with people trapped inside, banging on the windows and pleading for help.

Driven by instinct, Serrano fled his fourth-floor apartment with his mother, sister and nanny, climbing to the roof. From there, they watched floodwaters engulf the building's lower floors as massive trees slammed into its columns, fearing it would collapse like others nearby.

Their fears eased at dawn as the rain stopped and the floodwaters began to recede. After waiting in vain for rescue, the family made their way through mud, rocks, debris and fallen trees to his grandparents' home in a nearby neighborhood.

The 1999 floods and landslides known as the "Vargas Tragedy" killed 782 people, another 2,000 were reported missing and about 250,000 residents were affected, according to Ángel Rangel, who led rescue operations as director of Venezuela's Civil Protection agency.

Still shaken by the devastation left by the earthquakes, Serrano believes La Guaira — bordered by the Caribbean Sea and the Ávila mountain range — is under a curse.

"It isn't normal for such horrible things to happen in the same place," he said.

Rangel, a disaster specialist, sees it differently. The engineer said the buildings that collapsed in La Guaira were built on terrain formed over centuries by sediment carried down from the surrounding mountains.

"That type of terrain is particularly risky for construction," Rangel said, adding that building in such areas requires "strict adherence to seismic-resistant engineering standards" adopted after the powerful 1967 earthquake that struck Caracas.

Many of the buildings that collapsed in La Guaira were built in the 1970s, and it remains unclear whether they met those standards.

After losing his home and all his belongings, Serrano said he does not know what comes next. But one thing is certain: He will never live in La Guaira again.

"That's twice now," he said. "Sometimes I think if there's a third time, it's going to win the battle."

Four days to make victims fall in love: How global scammers use US tech to fleece people

By ERIKA KINETZ Associated Press

The instructions were clear: He had four days to make each victim fall in love.

And there were a lot of victims. Online, Safeer Mohammed Koorimannil, who was trafficked to a scam center in Myanmar, impersonated a 28-year-old Singaporean woman named Ella. On a typical shift, he said, he chatted with more than 100 people across dozens of profiles at the same time, as supervisors prowled among the desks with electric batons.

In just a month, Koorimannil targeted some 50,000 victims from at least 17 countries, according to records he smuggled out to The Associated Press. His "clients" included a widowed tailor in Kurdistan, a pastry

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 44 of 84

chef in Turkey, a sheep farmer in Kyrgyzstan, soldiers in Iraq, an engineer in Russia, a building painter in Germany, a port officer in Argentina, a student in Indonesia, a security guard in Poland and a dairy farmer in the Republic of Georgia. And he did it using software built with artificial intelligence models from American tech companies that scammers are abusing to target victims at unprecedented speed and scale. "Everyone is a robot there," he told AP from his home in southern India in his native Malayalam language.

Technology from American companies is being used to power a revolution in the scam industry, playing a key role in the industrialization and globalization of fraud in ways that have not been clear until now, an AP/"FRONTLINE" investigation has found. Watchdogs say these companies have the technical capacity to do more to protect against abuse but lack the legal, regulatory and business incentives to crack down on a crime the Federal Trade Commission estimates cost Americans nearly \$200 billion in losses in 2024.

While most public scrutiny of the technology that fuels scams has focused on the social media platforms victims see, the infrastructure exploited to commit fraud begins much farther upstream, the investigation showed. American technology is present all along the digital supply chains that connect scammers with the scammed, from AI models baked into powerful new tools to optimize workflow and create more perfect fakes, to satellite dishes that enable scammers to evade internet crackdowns, to internet service providers that carry traffic from the lawless borderlands of Myanmar to the phones and computers of millions of victims.

The AP found no evidence to suggest these companies were doing anything illegal themselves. However, the abuse of their tools and tech infrastructure at scam compounds in Myanmar, as documented by the AP and "FRONTLINE," raises questions about how vigorously they are enforcing their own terms of service, which prohibit illegal activity and, in many cases, explicitly ban fraud.

Among the AP's findings:

- American-made AI models — chiefly ChatGPT and Gemini — have been used to build specialized software that allows scammers to seamlessly work across dozens of languages, surveil workers and target victims around the world, the investigation found with the help of C4ADS, a Washington-based nonprofit focused on global security. Scammers who purchased these tools took in tens of millions of dollars, according to blockchain analysis by TRM Labs at the request of AP/"FRONTLINE."

- A sophisticated, global internet infrastructure supports Myanmar's scam compound economy, which relies on services from Cogent Communications, AT&T, DigitalOcean and Oracle, among others. One in five signals from devices at four scam compounds linked to sanctioned entities in Myanmar was carried by a U.S.-registered company, according to an AP analysis of more than 200,000 device connections provided by International Justice Mission, an anti-trafficking nonprofit.

- Elon Musk's satellite internet company, Starlink, is the number one internet service provider in Myanmar, including to scam centers, according to device data, public records and interviews — despite public pressure from Congress and a widely publicized crackdown last fall.

- At least 25 new scam compounds have been built deep inside Myanmar since a high-profile crackdown along the Thai border last fall, new satellite imagery shows. Scammers from at least 13 of these outposts used Starlink IP addresses to get online between early March and the end of May, an AP analysis of device and satellite data from International Justice Mission shows.

The AP/"FRONTLINE" investigation was based on tens of thousands of leaked scam center files, videos and photos; an analysis with C4ADS of misuse of AI at scam centers; an examination of more than 200,000 connections made by devices over a year at four scam compounds in Myanmar linked to entities sanctioned by the U.S. government; and interviews with 58 scam victims and three dozen current and former scammers from 19 countries.

Cybersecurity experts say internet service providers, AI companies and Starlink could do more to prevent the abuse by scammers — but lack the legal, regulatory and business incentives.

"If there's no disincentive to continuing this, if there's no cost to actually facilitating scamming, then why would I spend a dollar to prevent scamming?" said Sascha Meinrath, the Palmer chair in telecommunications at Penn State University. "This is the problem. It's identifiable, it's addressable — at least somewhat

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 45 of 84

— but it costs something. And right now the cost of facilitating scamming is zero.”

Outside the United States, that cost is starting to rise. The United Kingdom, the European Union, Australia and Singapore have introduced new regulations that require companies to do more to prevent scams — or face financial penalties.

Meanwhile, in Washington, lawmakers and government officials have been asking American tech companies to cooperate to cut scammers off from U.S. infrastructure, but on a voluntary basis.

In November, District of Columbia U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro created the Scam Center Strike Force to target scam compounds. In a four-day exercise in May, the Strike Force worked with Meta, SpaceX, Google and others to disrupt more than 1.4 million social media and email accounts, interrupt malicious IP address traffic, seize satellite internet terminals and decommission servers and hosting infrastructure linked to Southeast Asian scam networks. “We will not allow criminal organizations to weaponize our own infrastructure against us or devastate the life savings of hardworking families,” Pirro said in an email to AP. “Our message is clear: we will find you, we will stop you, and we will protect the American people.”

OpenAI and Google both said they have robust programs in place to proactively disrupt scammers from abusing their tools. Starlink did not respond to detailed requests for comment.

Internet service providers emphasized that they can’t see the content their networks carry or what end users are doing online — privacy by design that constrains their ability to monitor for abuse. All said they respond to valid abuse reports and cooperate with law enforcement. None would disclose specific customer information, citing privacy rules, but several said they had taken concrete action in response to AP’s reporting.

OpenAI said that based on the information AP shared, it identified and banned three accounts that had been using its models to support online scams. Oracle said it was “diligently working with law enforcement” on the material shared by AP. UpCloud, a Finnish cloud services provider with servers in the U.S., said AP’s query had prompted an internal review and refinement of its risk assessment processes.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has likened artificial intelligence to a utility, akin to electricity or water. But unlike water utilities, tech and telecom companies in the United States are generally not responsible for proactively ensuring the safety of the content they carry.

Some people believe that should change.

“This has to be like clean water,” said Matthew Moynahan, the CEO of GetReal Security, a cybersecurity firm. “Anything coming out of the tap for an end user, whether that tap is a PC, a browser somewhere, or your mobile phone, dirty water shouldn’t get to you. This is what this is.”

Almost Automated: American AI abused for industrial-scale scamming in SE Asia

The use of AI in scams is exploding so fast that many in the cybersecurity community fear fully-automated scams run by AI agents will soon become commonplace.

“We’re moving towards a world where maybe you don’t need human scammers anymore,” said Ari Redbord, global head of policy at TRM Labs, a crypto analytics firm. “All you need is hundreds, thousands, millions of agentic agents who don’t need to sleep, don’t need to eat, who are 24/7 doing this.”

Already, the basic AI-powered tools Koorimannil used required scant human intervention. His job was to cut and paste responses from scripts his scam bosses generated.

Koorimannil and his best friend had answered an ad online for jobs encouraging tourism to Thailand. From the airport in Bangkok, however, a waiting black car sped them to the border with Myanmar, he said, and the next morning armed men escorted them across the Moei River to Tai Chang, a scam compound the U.S. government sanctioned last year.

Koorimannil managed to sneak out a screenshot from his computer that AP and security nonprofit C4ADS used to identify the key to his productivity — a software platform called Kongtian Intelligent Customer Acquisition, or KT for short.

AP also identified a similar suite of software, called Global Social Traffic Navigation, or 007TG, described by a former scammer as a “one-stop shop” for running scams at industrial scale.

KT and 007TG are part of a thriving gray market for tech that has both legitimate and illegitimate uses and is widely exploited by scammers, according to blockchain analysis, a review of Telegram channels fre-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 46 of 84

quented by scammers, and interviews with scammers from three countries. KT and 007TG were created by for-profit businesses using AI models from leading global companies and sold to scammers — who in turn generated tens of millions of dollars in illicit profits.

OpenAI's ChatGPT played the most prominent role, along with Google's Gemini, though the software incorporated other AI models as well, including from Europe and China. Both KT and 007TG used ChatGPT and Gemini to generate automated replies, power a role-play chatbot, which scammers could use to develop convincing characters, and embed real-time translation in over 100 languages, C4ADS found. KT and 007TG software also tracked the performance of workers — to devastating effect, in Koorimannil's case.

He was beaten for being bad at scamming people, leaving his body red and swollen with lashes, photographs show.

"When they came near my computer, my hands would shake and sweat," Koorimannil told AP.

At night, he said, he and his best friend curled in the same narrow bunk, too frightened to sleep alone.

Blockchain analysis, done for AP/"FRONTLINE" by TRM Labs, shows how powerful these tools can be. Cryptocurrency transactions are recorded on an indelible public ledger, or blockchain, which can be analyzed to show the pattern and volume of cryptocurrency transactions. TRM Labs found that a single crypto wallet used by 007TG received \$860,000 in payments between April 2024 and December 2025 — including transfers from at least four cryptocurrency wallets associated with known scam networks. Those scammers, in turn, raked in at least \$75 million.

Stopping AI abuses at scale is challenging because scammers often use ChatGPT the same way hundreds of millions of other people do — to translate, help write messages, create content and do basic research, according to OpenAI. The intimacy, financial pressure and manipulative language in romance scams, for example, may be hard to distinguish from genuine users seeking help with a divorce. And tools like KT and 007TG can have legitimate uses, especially for Chinese businesses seeking to expand overseas.

But by tracking user behavior over time to surface patterns of deception and manipulation, OpenAI said it detects scams with 95% accuracy and takes down 100,000 scam accounts each month. The company said it has also independently disrupted service to scam networks operating from Cambodia, Myanmar and Nigeria.

Even as fraud networks exploit their technology, a growing number of people are using the same tools to fight back. OpenAI said people use ChatGPT millions of times a month to identify and avoid scams — up to three times more often, the company estimates, than the model is abused by scammers. OpenAI also recently collaborated with the Global Anti-Scam Alliance to launch scam.org, which helps users assess the risk they are being targeted by scammers.

Google did not respond to specific questions about AP's findings, but said the company is "committed to developing AI responsibly" and engineers its models with safety guardrails to filter out content that promotes scams. 007TG went dark in December but has since claimed to be back up and running. Neither it nor KT responded to requests for comment.

In the end, through a connection in Bahrain, Koorimannil and his friend found a broker who oversaw ransom payments for 21 Indians from their compound, he said.

They each had to pay 500,000 Indian rupees (\$5,300) for their freedom.

Missed signals: US internet service providers play outsized role in carrying scam center traffic

It took a long time for Chris Colocousis to understand the extent to which scammers around the world use American technology to prey on people like him. At first, all he saw was that the woman who reached out to him on Facebook had a New York phone number — not too far away from his home in Massachusetts — and said she worked at a well-known financial firm in Atlanta.

"Eliza" suggested a video call. And there she was — the same blond beauty as in her Facebook photos. She even had little bags under her eyes. She was too real not to be real.

Now Colocousis, a divorced man in his 60s, has no idea where "Eliza" really is, whether he was talking with her or with ChatGPT — and even if she's a she. He does know that the \$400,000 he says he "invested" under Eliza's guidance is now gone, robbing him of the secure retirement he'd spent years working for.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 47 of 84

"You just feel like your whole world fell apart," he said. "I'm thinking about all this time that I invested into reaching a point where I could retire at a certain age — and it's just gone."

Each step of a fraud is a digital signal, said John Breyault, vice president of public policy, telecommunications and fraud at the nonprofit National Consumers League. And internet service providers are the network on which many of these services ride.

"The ISPs are in a particularly critical place in this chain," he said.

New data shows that U.S. internet service providers play an outsized role in scams run out of Myanmar. The AP analyzed a sample of 202,013 connections made by devices at four scam compounds in Myanmar — KK Park, Tai Chang, Deko Park and a newer site near Hpakalu. One in five was routed through U.S. internet service providers. No other nonregional country came close.

Among them were Cogent Communications, Oracle, AT&T and DigitalOcean. Companies outside the United States — including UpCloud, the Finnish cloud provider, and GlobalTeleHost, a Canadian hosting and internet infrastructure company — also used servers in the U.S. to host high-risk traffic from scam centers, the data shows.

"They are getting paid a lot of money to route these IP addresses," said Riley Kilmer, co-founder of Spur Intelligence Corporation, a cybersecurity company. "Right now the revenue outweighs the risk. And if you could shift that balance, the ISPs would have to act."

Internet service providers have access to a trove of data that could be used to minimize illicit activity, but doing so requires significant investment, cybersecurity analysts say.

"The policy in much of the hosting world tends to be, we will take action after the fact," said Dan Winchester, co-founder of Scamalytics, a fraud prevention company. "That's not really very effective. What you need to be doing is proactively stopping fraud on your servers."

The ad tech data was compiled by International Justice Mission between February 2025 and January 2026. This data captures a slice of activity from apps that share information with data brokers, which can reveal the location and IP address a given device is using when it goes online. AP then identified the companies those IP addresses had been allocated to using a database maintained by Scamalytics, which also rates IP addresses for potential fraud risk.

These companies were among the most significant players in the dataset:

ORACLE

More than 100 U.S.-geolocated IP addresses allocated to Oracle were used at the KK Park scam compound between February and April 2025. AP shared the detailed connection data with Oracle. "We are diligently working with law enforcement on this matter," an Oracle spokesperson told AP.

COGENT COMMUNICATIONS

Cogent Communications was among the biggest players, with connections from KK Park and Tai Chang scam compounds. Nearly 40% of the IP addresses allocated to Cogent appeared on publicly available blacklists of potential abuse, according to Scamalytics data. Scamalytics rated 99.6% of them as potentially risky. Cogent says it relies on third parties to report fraud and investigates every verified complaint, but like other ISPs, it can't see user traffic directly.

AT&T

IP addresses allocated to AT&T were used at three compounds between February 2025 and January 2026. AT&T says it's cracking down on fraud by making traffic on its network more transparent. In September it began enforcing new rules that require business customers to route traffic under their own network identity, not AT&T's, to make it harder to disguise questionable activity.

DIGITALOCEAN

Devices from KK Park and Hpakalu used at least 41 IP addresses allocated to DigitalOcean, a cloud infrastructure provider based in Colorado. Scamalytics rated nearly all as potentially risky. DigitalOcean said it reviewed the data shared by AP but declined to disclose the outcome. The company said it does not control how customer applications are used and works closely with them to fight abuse.

UPCLOUD

UpCloud had a single IP address — linked to a server in New York City and rated very high risk by Sca-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 48 of 84

malytics — which connected to at least 382 times between February and April 2025 with devices inside KK Park. UpCloud said the data AP shared “triggered a thorough internal review on our side to ensure that the risk of similar situations is further reduced going forward.” The company said it may have involved a VPN hosted on its platform, but noted that it cannot access customer systems, which are private. They declined to provide further details, citing European data protection laws. The firm said it monitors for illegal activity as mandated by EU law but does not rely on Scamalytics because their risk assessments are not detailed enough.

GLOBALTELEHOST

GlobalTeleHost, a Canadian company that provides data center equipment and network connectivity for business customers, was allocated IP addresses used at KK Park and Tai Chang. Two-thirds appeared on public blacklists as potentially abusive, according to Scamalytics, which rated 99.9% as potentially risky. GlobalTeleHost said it does not serve end users directly and does not control its customers’ applications, traffic or internal review processes. The company said the IPs shared by AP were assigned to commercial VPN providers. The company said it passed AP’s technical findings to those customers and asked them to investigate, but some responded that their records were not detailed enough to identify specific users. GlobalTeleHost said it does not rely on Scamalytics risk ratings but acts on “verified abuse complaints and lawful requests from authorities.”

In many cases, scammers in Myanmar routed their internet connections through U.S.-based cloud services to hide where they were really located before connecting to major platforms — chiefly Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, according to Kentik, a network monitoring firm in San Francisco that mapped internet traffic from a sample of data shared by AP. That makes it easier for scammers to appear to be somewhere else and slip past platform safety checks.

Meta said that kind of deliberate evasion is why collaboration — with law enforcement and across industry, including connectivity and technology companies — is key to disrupting bad actors at scale.

“Scammers are determined criminals who use increasingly sophisticated tactics to defraud people and evade detection on our platforms and across the internet,” a spokesperson said in a statement. By analyzing behavioral patterns of users, Meta said it has been able to disrupt millions of accounts tied to scam centers across Southeast Asia and the United Arab Emirates.

“This stuff is so pervasive,” said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis at Kentik. “You can successfully launder connections to your heart’s content.”

One way to do that is by leasing IP addresses which can be more valuable when traffic appears to originate from a well-known provider. This profitable loophole can be exploited to evade security controls. AT&T began enforcing a change in September that tightened this loophole by requiring business customers to announce their own network identity.

“It would be great if everybody did what AT&T did,” Madory said. “They probably lost some customers out of that policy, but those were pretty bad customers.”

Colocousis said people who think scam victims like him are gullible idiots don’t understand the sophistication of criminal organizations behind online fraud.

On Jan. 25, 2025, Colocousis laid out \$80,000 cash in neat rows on his table, just as the customer service representative at his crypto trading app had instructed. Eliza had told him if he just paid this last bit, he could unlock his funds and withdraw all his money.

“I will tell you that I feel a little uneasy but I know you keep telling me it’s ok,” he messaged her. She responded instantly with a string of kiss emoji.

The next morning a young man, who Colocousis said showed up in a Jeep with New York plates, trudged across a thin layer of snow to his doorstep. Once inside, the man — who said his name was Vincent — told Colocousis to put the stacks of \$50 and \$100 bills in a plastic shopping bag. Vincent sent a message and the money instantly appeared in the fraudulent crypto trading account Eliza had helped Colocousis open, he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 49 of 84

Vincent left with a big smile and a quick, amiable wave. "See you next time," he said. "Maybe. OK. Bye-bye."

Colocousis believes American tech companies should do more to protect people like him. He is still so shaken that he says he sometimes has trouble leaving his house.

"The greed is --," Colocousis searched for words. "I'm all for capitalism, but when it's totally ruining people's lives, people that have worked their whole life towards a goal so that they don't have to work anymore, only to have it just ripped out of their chest — you know, something's wrong."

Starlink is the top internet service provider in Myanmar and scammers have been a big part of its user base, data shows

Today, Musk's Starlink satellite service is the most widely used internet provider in Myanmar, including at known scam compounds, AP found — despite an ongoing congressional investigation, a November order from a U.S. court to seize Starlink accounts from specific Myanmar scam compounds and announcements, in October and June, that Starlink had cut service to thousands of units around scam centers.

Sen. Maggie Hassan, a New Hampshire Democrat who is leading a bipartisan congressional investigation into the role Starlink and other companies play in the surging losses of scam victims in America, has pressed SpaceX for details on Starlink's role in transnational fraud and urged the company to do more to prevent the criminal misuse of its devices. "We need to do more at every level to combat the scams that are plaguing Americans across the country," she said in an email to the AP. "Given that SpaceX's Starlink is the first choice of satellite internet technology for many scammers, cutting off scammers' access to Starlink is a key way to prevent scams at the source."

To be sure, Starlink has been a lifeline for schools, humanitarian groups, hospitals, media and more in Myanmar, according to Amnesty International and others. But data from the Asia Pacific Network Information Center (APNIC), the regional internet registry, indicates that scammers represent a disproportionate share of its user base.

Myanmar has become a haven for industrial-scale scam compounds, which have drafted some 300,000 people from dozens of countries, often against their will, according to the United Nations. One of those compounds is Deko Park, a conglomeration of big, blue-roofed buildings dotted with white satellite dishes near the Thai border.

Data from a sample of devices at Deko Park, provided by International Justice Mission, shows Starlink among the top internet service providers in use from Dec. 10, 2025, to Jan. 6, 2026, just after two regional telecom companies.

An Ethiopian engineer named Ebisa told AP he used Starlink at Deko Park from December 2024 through December 2025, when he managed to escape. He asked AP to only publish his first name because he wants to protect his privacy. Ebisa's job was to collect the WhatsApp numbers of rich, vulnerable men. He said he was constantly punished — beaten, shocked, detained and forced to exercise for hours at a time — for failing to meet impossible performance goals.

One day, he said, he got fed up and tried to evade a beating. He didn't get very far. He said the security guards at Deko Park beat him so badly he was blinded in one eye. Photographs show his eye injuries and AP spoke with an NGO who helped him seek medical care in Thailand.

"It was hard to survive," he told AP. "Finally, God helped us out from that hell."

Speaking from a shelter for human trafficking victims in Thailand in December, he said he wanted to get his eye fixed before going home because his mother's health is fragile and he worried the sight of his injury might kill her.

"It's very shameful," he said. "If God helps me, if I get medication, maybe I can get back my eye."

He told AP on Monday from his home in Ethiopia that doctors had informed him they could not save his eye. "It's been a tough reality to face," he said. "They told me that it's too late to bring back my sight."

A Nigerian who was also tricked into working at Deko Park, Obinna Okeadu, never made it back home, according to three co-workers, a human rights activist and reports from his family back in Nigeria.

On the afternoon of Oct. 28, 2025, Okeadu and his roommate, Ogbonnaya Tochukwu Agwu — known

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 50 of 84

as Valentine — came off an unsuccessful overnight shift and were called out for punishment.

Back in their dorm room after the beating, Valentine watched as Okeadu began to tremble uncontrollably. Okeadu slid to the ground with a thud, his head lolling strangely, with sharp, anguished sounds rising from his body.

"It's OK," a friend told him softly. "We're here."

But Okeadu was not OK.

"I'm going to die like this," Okeadu called out, according to Valentine.

Valentine said Okeadu was taken away — presumably to a hospital. He prayed for his friend. But the next day, Okeadu's computer disappeared and his name was deleted from work chats.

Valentine never saw him again.

This kind of abuse — and the swelling cost of cyberscams to victims around the world — has led to periodic crackdowns. In early 2025, Thailand temporarily cut off internet connectivity, electricity and gas supplies to scam compounds just over its border with Myanmar.

Starlink was a way around the blockade at the time. Satellite dishes proliferated on the rooftops of scam centers in Myanmar, satellite imagery showed, and Starlink usage in Myanmar surged, according to APNIC data.

In April 2025, as the United States prepared sanctions against foreign scam networks in Southeast Asia, SpaceX reassigned IP addresses from Tanzania to create a dedicated block for Myanmar. It's not clear why, but experts say that step is usually taken to serve growing demand or prepare for entry into a new market.

By June 2025, Starlink was the number one internet service provider in the impoverished, war-torn country, with a 14% share of the market — despite its relatively high cost, according to APNIC data.

In October, amid another sweeping crackdown, Starlink said it cut services to more than 2,500 units near scam compounds in Myanmar. It lost nearly half of its users in the country and its market share plunged from 15% to 6.5%, according to APNIC data.

But in December, Starlink use surged back, and by February, the company was again number one in Myanmar. Today it has a nearly 20% share of the market, APNIC data show.

SpaceX's October service cuts demonstrated that the company can sever scam centers from its satellites when it wants to — and shows just how important the criminal networks that pay for scam center infrastructure have been to its user base.

According to Starlink's own coverage map, it does not sell services in Myanmar. AP asked Myanmar's ruling military government whether Starlink was legally authorized to work in the country but got no response.

Starlink also declined to respond to detailed requests for comment. But in public comments, Lauren Dreyer, vice president of Starlink business operations at SpaceX, has said that Starlink has "zero tolerance" for abuse.

"We proactively detect and disable terminals involved in illegal activity," she said in a June statement about the company's work with the Scam Center Strike Force. "Through collaboration with law enforcement and technology companies, we advance global anti-scam efforts and ensure Starlink remains a force for good."

Yet Starlink's service cuts have not stopped scammers — not even from one of the most high-profile scam compounds in Asia, KK Park.

In October, in response to growing international pressure, Myanmar's military government began demolishing the compound and broadcast images of dozens of seized Starlink terminals. But when the scammers scattered, they brought their tech with them.

By January, at least seven devices used at KK Park had migrated to a new compound some 30 kilometers to the northwest, near Hpakalu, according to International Justice Mission, which tracked the devices using ad tech data.

"These new compounds are showing up in the middle of nowhere and they're walled multibuilding complexes with a bunch of these terminals on the roof," said Eric Heintz, a global analyst at IJM. "You should be able to shut them down, and there should be a paper trail for who's paying the subscriptions for them."

Heintz has identified at least 25 new sites in Myanmar that have appeared or grown significantly since the crackdown last fall. Satellite imagery, verified by AP, shows empty fields transformed into industrial-

scale office parks in just a few months and new roads cut through thick trees.

White satellite dishes dot the rooftops of some of them, and geolocated device data shows that scammers from at least 13 are logging on just as they did before: With Starlink.

Republican Tom Kean Jr. set to return to Congress after long unexplained absence

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Tom Kean Jr., the New Jersey Republican who's been away from Congress for almost four months, is expected to re-emerge in public after months of speculation about the unspecified medical condition he says has kept him away from Washington.

Kean, 57, a second-term lawmaker and scion of a New Jersey political family, represents a battleground district that includes President Donald Trump's Bedminster golf club. He's missed more than 100 votes in Congress this year and hasn't been seen publicly in Washington or his district despite winning the Republican nomination to serve another term.

Kean's spokesman promised the congressman would return to work Tuesday and be transparent about what has kept him away. Last week, Kean answered the door of his home when a New York Times reporter visited, but declined to be interviewed, saying only that he would speak to them later.

The mystery over Kean's absence carries potential political implications, given the competitive district he represents and the Republican Party's narrow control of the House. His office has said he is still running for reelection and is set to face Democratic nominee Rebecca Bennett, a former Navy helicopter pilot, in New Jersey's most high-profile contest in November.

Democrats have targeted the district as a prime pick-up opportunity, given that the seat has changed hands in the last two midterm elections. Kean won in 2022 by defeating Democrat Tom Malinowski, who had defeated Republican Leonard Lance in 2018.

Kean's last vote was months ago

Kean last voted in the House on March 5, but his absence wasn't explained.

In April, his social media account said he had been dealing with a personal medical issue and his doctors expected him to recover.

Kean's absence has also complicated matters for House Republican leaders, who are struggling every day to pass bills with their razor-thin majority, 218-212. Speaker Mike Johnson and other GOP leaders repeatedly told reporters they were in touch with Kean, but said he would have to address the circumstances himself.

Trump has endorsed Kean's reelection, without mentioning his absence.

Kean comes from a long line of public servants, stretching 250 years to the country's founding when one of his ancestors became New Jersey's first leader since independence.

His great-grandfather was a senator, his grandfather was a congressman and his father is the former two-term governor, Tom Kean Sr.

Trump's fixation on voting has had mixed results. He still has ways to affect November's elections

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Donald Trump has tried many ways to tighten his grip on U.S. elections, from signing executive orders to pushing restrictive legislation in Congress. Monday's Supreme Court ruling siding with states that accept late-arriving mail ballots was the latest example showing the limits of his reach.

It followed back-to-back rulings last week that barred his two sweeping executive orders seeking to change national election rules, more court rulings preventing his Department of Justice from obtaining detailed state voter data and his stalled attempts to get the Senate to pass the SAVE Act. That measure would eliminate nearly all absentee voting, require citizenship documents to register to vote and impose photo identification requirements nationwide right before the midterm elections.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 52 of 84

"It's been a mixed bag for Republicans," said University of Notre Dame law professor Derek Muller. But the president, he added, "has come up mostly empty-handed."

Trump's efforts have not been entirely fruitless. Republican-run states have satisfied his demands to redraw congressional district lines, efforts buoyed by the Supreme Court striking down a key section of the Voting Rights Act, and he has been directing his Department of Justice to investigate voting and election operations, which Democrats see as a possible prelude to their involvement in November.

All the activity around how the nation votes and runs its elections is a reflection of the Republican president's long fixation on his false claim that his 2020 election defeat was rigged. He has been so frustrated by the inability of the Senate to pass the SAVE Act that he has refused to sign a bipartisan housing bill.

He weighed in again Monday after the Supreme Court's decision in the mail ballot deadline case, saying on his social media account that he is trying to "save America from crooked elections." Voting rights groups and Democrats see him abusing power and attempting to suppress legal voters to gain an advantage in the midterms, when control of Congress is at stake.

Regardless, Muller said Trump faces legal and political realities: The Constitution gives the states and Congress authority over elections while providing no such role for the president.

"That's how federalism works," Muller said.

Here's a look at Trump's efforts to reshape election rules and what options he might have left for the November midterms.

Focus on noncitizens and voter data has met roadblocks

The president has repeatedly said U.S. elections are riddled with fraud in part because of noncitizen voting. Research shows the problem to be rare, accounting for a minuscule percentage of fraud cases. Convictions are measured in the hundreds over periods in which tens of millions of ballots are cast.

Trump's view resulted in a multiagency push to nationalize voter data and use federal resources to help states remove voters from the rolls. The Department of Justice has sought detailed voter files from multiple states, data that would include dates of birth and partial Social Security numbers. Democratic and some Republican secretaries of state balked, and federal lawsuits followed. The administration has lost every case so far.

Homeland Security citizenship check rejected in court

Trump's Department of Homeland Security, with help from the DOGE effort led by Elon Musk, revamped a government tool called SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements). The program has been a key pillar of his efforts to cull potentially ineligible voters from state rolls.

Last week, a federal judge blocked its use as a mass citizenship check.

The administration, according to its own news releases, had allowed local election administrators to search users by the thousands, using a wider range of metrics rather than DHS-issued identification numbers. At least 67 million registrations, primarily in Republican-controlled states, were analyzed. Tens of thousands were flagged as potential noncitizens or people who have died, but some voters were wrongly identified as ineligible.

U.S. District Court Judge Sparkle L. Sooknunan ruled that Trump's changes aggregated Americans' sensitive personal data in a way that could result in voters being wrongly purged from the rolls.

"All in all, the federal government has knowingly trampled on the privacy rights of American citizens in a manner that threatens the sacred right to vote," Sooknunan said in her order.

Executive orders used in place of legislation

As presidents before him, Trump signed executive orders when Congress would not enact his policy preferences.

Trump's first order reflected his emphasis on noncitizens. Like the SAVE Act pending on Capitol Hill, it sought to require would-be voters to document their citizenship to be able to register to vote.

U.S. District Court Judge Denise Casper put a temporary block on the order last year as she considered the case and last week made her decision permanent. The Constitution, Casper wrote, "does not grant the President any specific powers over elections."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 53 of 84

Trump issued a second order in March, as the SAVE Act's rough path in Congress became obvious. He called for a national voter list using data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Social Security Administration. Further, the order would have empowered the U.S. Postal Service to determine who gets an absentee ballot and threatened local elections officials with prosecution.

Absentee voting is a staple of U.S. elections, but Trump describes the practice, incorrectly, as allowing fraud — even as he has used it himself. A 2025 report by the Brookings Institution found that mail voting fraud occurred in only 0.000043% of total mail ballots cast.

Democratic secretaries of state sued, and U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani made the same legal assessment as Casper. The provisions, she wrote last week, "unconstitutionally violate the separation of powers."

The White House has indicated it will appeal.

Even Trump says the SAVE Act has long odds

Trump on Monday called the Senate logjam "crazy" and one of the holdouts, Republican Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, "Trump-deranged."

It's the latest legislative tussle that prompted Trump to demand Republicans scrap the filibuster, which requires most major legislation to get support from 60 of the 100 senators. But that likely wouldn't matter in this case, with four of the Senate's 53 Republicans declaring their opposition to the bill itself: Murkowski, Susan Collins of Maine, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

The president acknowledged Monday that the SAVE Act is "probably not going to happen."

Trump still has options for the November elections

Both major parties have national operations to monitor elections, including legal teams ready to file challenges.

Despite the Republican National Committee losing the mail ballot case, Chairman Joe Gruters on Monday alluded to those efforts: "We are not going to be deterred by this decision, and the RNC will keep fighting to have elections end on Election Day," he said.

Meanwhile, Trump has been developing a possible roadmap for more aggressive actions.

His U.S. attorney in Los Angeles said in June that he had opened multiple election fraud investigations, and he sent a prosecutor to the county's vote-tabulation center after California's June primary. Six months earlier, FBI agents executed a warrant and seized ballots and other records from the 2020 election in Georgia's Fulton County, which includes Atlanta.

Muller, the law professor, said local elections officials "already are having conversations about chain of custody disputes" for ballots as they are cast, collected, counted and stored.

He and UCLA law professor Rick Hasen noted that judicial warrants are required for the kinds of actions that happened in Fulton County. Muller predicted "the bar would be even higher" for any warrant the administration requests during a live election.

Hasen added that he's working to educate judges around the country on the importance of chain of custody for ballots.

"Republicans believe him when he says the election is rigged. And then when Republicans try to change voting rules to tighten things up, that causes Democrats to also think that the election system is being rigged," Hasen said. "So, if what he's trying to achieve is undermine voters' confidence in the election process, he seems to have succeeded spectacularly."

A Jefferson for every era, from Lincoln to Trump, and the contradictions that endure

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — He's a prize-winning presidential historian who wrote an entire biography of Thomas Jefferson. But even Jon Meacham needs to think for a moment before defining what it means to be a "Jeffersonian."

"Well for a long time, before the civil rights movement, it meant to be more inclined toward states' rights

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 54 of 84

and limited government,” says Meacham, the National Constitution Center’s Semiquincentennial Scholar. He then pauses, and asks to start over, recalling how President Franklin Delano Roosevelt evoked Jefferson as an “apostle of liberty” who would have supported the U.S. fighting the Nazis in World War II.

You could define it in so many ways. Historians may argue over the “greatness” of individual founders, but as the country’s 250th anniversary approaches many agree that no one’s life and work resonates like Jefferson’s. He embodied the “very best and the very worst” of the United States, Meacham says.

And a great deal in between.

America’s birth is rooted in his most profound contradiction — the man who proclaimed that “all men are created equal” while being a slaveholder to the end of his life. But Jefferson advanced and explored both sides of so many issues and world views that have defined the country’s path: agrarian self-sufficiency and worldly innovation, pluralism and separatism, limited government and dreams of an “empire of liberty.”

“There is no more malleable figure in early America than Jefferson,” says Andrew Burstein, a professor of history at Louisiana State University who has summed up Jefferson’s legacy in a book he published a decade ago: “Democracy’s Muse: How Thomas Jefferson became an FDR Liberal, a Reagan Republican, and a Tea Party Fanatic, All the While Being Dead.”

“There have been times in American history when just about everyone would have considered themselves ‘Jeffersonian,’” says historian Peter S. Onuf, author of numerous works on Jefferson. “Yet even at those moments, he was a controversial figure.”

It’s an argument without end

Jefferson’s legacy is debated even in settings that owe their existence to him.

On the campus of the University of Virginia, the college he founded and regarded as a signature achievement, stands a memorial to thousands of enslaved people who lived and worked there.

At Monticello, the mountaintop estate and plantation outside of Charlottesville where Jefferson lived when not in public office, a banner near the entrance features the Declaration and the caption, “After all, our guy wrote it.” But once on the grounds, reminders of his enslavement of hundreds are found throughout, from its “Burial Ground for Enslaved People” that includes dozens of graves to an exhibit dedicated to Sally Hemings, the enslaved woman with whom Jefferson is widely believed to have had six children.

Monticello’s director of historic interpretation and audience engagement, Brandon Dillard, cites the staff’s mission “to tell unflinching stories of America’s complex origins and fitful progress toward the ideals Jefferson articulated in the Declaration of Independence.”

Jefferson regarded Monticello as a refuge from the times, but the times inevitably find their way here. A guide on the gardens and grounds tour points out that a foldable plant Jefferson tried and failed to grow — the “Mimosa Pudica,” or “sensitive plant” — now thrives because of climate change. The visitors’ center is LEED Gold-certified for green energy, Dillard says, and geothermal systems have been installed in other buildings for temperature control.

Monticello raises questions old and new about race. Virtually all of the guides are white, an issue Dillard notes is prevalent nationwide. A recent survey released by the American Association for State and Local History found that around just 10% of workers at museums, historic sites and historical societies were nonwhite and that many “Latino/a/x, and multiracial respondents reported higher rates of discrimination and harassment.” (Dillard declined to answer in detail the experience of guides of color at Monticello.)

There is a Jefferson for every occasion

Jefferson’s contradictions date back through much of American history; he was claimed by both sides of the Civil War and both sides of the civil rights movement.

Nineteenth-century Confederates and 20th-century segregationists cited his defense of states’ rights, while Abraham Lincoln and civil rights leaders emphasized Jefferson as the author of the Declaration of Independence. In the space of a few months in 1963, he would be invoked in the inaugural speech of Alabama Gov. George Wallace as he vowed defiance of federal efforts to integrate the state’s schools and by the Rev. Martin Luther King as he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech during the March on Washington.

Roosevelt enlisted Jefferson as an ideological ally for the New Deal (the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., began as a New Deal project) and a former New Dealer-turned conservative, President

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 55 of 84

Ronald Reagan, held up Jefferson decades later as a foe of wasteful spending. Jefferson has been cited often by free-speech advocates for his crucial support for the Bill of Rights, while President Donald Trump has quoted Jefferson's 1807 lament that "Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper" as an implicit endorsement of his modern war against "fake news."

Jefferson has also been placed on either side of today's divide over immigration. Ibram X. Kendi, author of "How to Be an Anti-Racist," cites his well-documented belief in colonization for Black people as inspiration for contemporary scapegoating and xenophobia. Meanwhile, at a time when the Trump administration is aggressively trying to restrict immigration and even denaturalize some citizens, Monticello continues its decades-old July 4 naturalization ceremonies, with Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger scheduled as this year's keynote speaker.

"As new citizens share their personal stories every Fourth of July," Dillard says, "we are reminded that the values uplifted in that Declaration are values toward which people from all backgrounds aspire."

Many Monticello visitors, many reasons to visit

Monticello attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. They come for many reasons.

Erin Porter is a Virginia native in her 40s who until recently had never been to Monticello and wanted to cross it off her bucket list, while Nathan Jaycox of Connecticut is a former nuclear engineer now seeking to absorb history for a class he hopes to teach. Duane Cromwell, a longtime resident of Vancouver, was here on a very personal mission.

Cromwell, 70, grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, where she was taught that slavery was "an economic necessity" and learned nothing about Jefferson's history of enslavement. In town last month for a family reunion, she arrived at Monticello anxious to get past the "whitewashed Southern version" and the myths of evil "yankees" and the victimized rebels who defied them.

"Did you (ever) notice kudzu growing up over trees and buildings while in the South? It is an invasive plant brought to the region to control erosion. Well, it is like racism. It is pervasive, part of the horizon, always there but soon you don't notice it," she says.

"Having said that, I do think that people do go along better, there is more interactions, relationships than when I was growing up. Everyone needs each other and in the South, there is a great sense of humor and friendliness that help people navigate the awkward moments."

For Cromwell, Monticello was a chance to educate herself, to become a better person — and, like countless others before her, using Thomas Jefferson as a prism.

"Isn't that what it's all about?"

Israeli troops face resistance from residents as they push into a town in Syria

By OMAR SANADIKI and GHAITH ALSAYED Associated Press

ABDIN, Syria (AP) — As Israeli troops and vehicles entered the town of Abdin in southern Syria, residents blocked the roads with rocks, and some young men and boys threw stones to push back the military patrol.

Tensions in this part of the country created by a buffer zone occupied by Israeli forces have flared into violence in recent days, leaving residents anxious that more escalation is coming. Residents of Abdin, located near a U.N.-patrolled buffer zone now controlled by Israeli troops, tried to resist against a military incursion Sunday.

Residents said Israeli troops fired warnings shots at walls and between the angry protesters, before firing artillery rounds at the village. No one was harmed in the exchange, but most residents fled, and most were still too afraid to return on Monday. Many fear that there will now be more intense incursions and raids following the skirmish.

"They come into the village regularly, every few days," said resident Mohammad al-Hassan, standing not far from a group of children looking at an exploded shell. "They come in armored 4x4 vehicles, they roam around the village and search some houses, they knock on doors and if people don't answer the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 56 of 84

door they break it down and enter the houses. Women and children start screaming, it's a terrifying thing, them coming here."

Israel says it needs buffer zones to prevent attacks

Israel seized control of a U.N.-patrolled buffer zone in southern Syria in December 2024, following the ouster of former Syrian President Bashar Assad in an insurgent offensive. Israeli officials initially described the move as temporary to protect their borders from militant groups, but more recently top Israeli officials have said they plan to occupy the buffer zone in Syria indefinitely.

The Israeli military presence in southern Syria is part of a shift to a more aggressive strategy by Israel after the deadly October 2023 Hamas-led attacks in southern Israel. The Israeli military took over large portions of Gaza as part of a broad invasion, and later seized control of chunks of Lebanon — where the Hezbollah militant group has fired missiles and drones across the border — and Syria. Israel calls these areas "buffer zones" and says they are needed to prevent future attacks by militant groups.

There have been no cross-border attacks from Syria into Israel since Assad's ouster, except for two rockets from a little-known militant group. But Israel's military incursions into southwestern Syrian towns have sometimes sparked resistance by residents that has spiraled into deadly clashes.

Syrian officials condemn Israeli incursions

Syria's interim president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, has called on Israel to withdraw from the area that the U.N. says is 235 square kilometers (91 square miles). The Syrian government also condemned the Israeli incursion and shelling in Abdin.

The clashes in Abdin were the second outbreak of violence in less than 24 hours. Earlier on Sunday, the Israeli military announced that it had killed armed men in southern Syria without giving details.

An Israeli military official said Monday that Israeli soldiers had killed two militants who were planning on attacking Israeli troops. The official who spoke on condition of anonymity under military briefing rules did not specify where in Syria the incident took place.

The mayor of the Syrian village of Hadar said two unknown people driving a pickup truck just south of the village were killed in an attack, and that their bodies were taken by the Israeli military.

"There was the sound of an explosion when it happened," Imad Hassoun told The Associated Press. "They weren't from Hadar. If they were, we would immediately know."

Regarding the incident in Abdin, the Israeli official said armed militants opened fired against one of the Israeli military's strongholds but nobody was harmed in the attack, without giving further details.

Residents fear increasing instability

People in Abdin were initially hopeful that US-mediated talks between Israel and Syria in France aimed at reaching a security agreement would diffuse tensions, but the talks appear to have stalled.

Fearing the unstable security situation and struggling to cope with a lack of jobs and services, many residents who have lived in these towns are leaving elsewhere. The closest government security checkpoint to Abdin is some 10 kilometers (6 miles) away, and those who choose to stay are struggling with water and electricity shortages.

Sobhi al-Tawlbi, 66, says farmers have struggled to access their yield and sources of water.

"We need the government to support us a little so we can remain steadfast in our villages," he said, asking for the international community to put pressure on Israel to stop its military incursions.

Syrians living in that broader border area have maintained that they are not a threat to anyone and want a stable life, following over 13 years of civil war that decimated Syria.

"Why are they bothering us? We are living here peacefully in this border area," said al-Hassan.

Paraguay stuns Germany in a penalty shootout for the biggest upset of the 2026 World Cup

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — José Canale wasn't in the starting lineup in either of his previous two appearances for Paraguay in this World Cup.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 57 of 84

He made his first start a memorable one.

Canale scored on the first sudden-death penalty kick, Orlando Gill made two key saves in the shootout, and Paraguay beat Germany 4-3 on penalties Monday to earn the biggest upset of the 2026 World Cup.

It was a major triumph for the landlocked South American country of 7 million people that's surrounded by soccer giants like Argentina and Brazil. And it was the latest surprising exit by Germany, a four-time champion that has struggled at the World Cup since it last lifted the trophy in 2014.

"I think we deserved one more game and to be honest, considering everything that was said, everything we went through," Canale said. "What I want to highlight from our team is how united we are. ... Today was a game we really needed to show our true colors."

Paraguayans celebrated in the streets of the capital, Asunción, screaming, jumping and hugging when the match ended. Some cried and dropped to their knees in disbelief, with the familiar beat of the team's song "Soy Albirrojo" reverberating through the crowd.

Paraguay became the first team to defeat Germany in a penalty shootout at the World Cup. The Germans missed three of six penalty tries, the last by Jonathan Tah, who blasted his attempt high over the crossbar in the first sudden-death round, setting up Canale for the winner. Tah's miss followed a save by German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer of Fabian Balbuena's attempt that would have won it for Paraguay.

Tah also thought he had the go-ahead goal in extra time. He headed in a corner kick by Nathaniel Brown in the 102nd minute, but officials concluded after a video review that Waldemar Anton has pushed Gill to the ground before the shot and the goal was disallowed.

The Round of 32 match ended 1-1 after extra time. Paraguay took the lead when Julio Enciso scored on a header late in the first half, but Kai Havertz equalized in the 52nd minute for Germany.

"We had to analyze every player, every detail. Thanks to that I was able to only miss two penalties," Gill said. "This is for all the people of Paraguay."

Paraguay, which entered the match ranked 41st by FIFA, became the deepest betting long shot to win a match in this World Cup. Germany came in as the 10th-ranked team in the world.

The Paraguayans will face the winner of Tuesday's match between France and Sweden in the Round of 16 on Saturday in Philadelphia. A win on the 250th anniversary of the United States' founding would send Paraguay back to Foxborough for the quarterfinals on July 9.

Germany had won six of seven penalty shootouts in major tournaments, including six straight since losing to Czechoslovakia in the 1976 European Championship final.

"It's not enough for German football," coach Julian Nagelsmann said.

In the only previous World Cup match between the teams, Germany beat Paraguay 1-0 in the round of 16 at the 2002 tournament. Nearly a quarter-century later, Paraguay got its revenge.

Paraguay had appeared in five previous knockout games but failed to score in each. It had advanced only once, winning on penalty kicks against Japan in the round of 16 at the 2010 tournament in South Africa. It fell that year to eventual champion Spain in the quarterfinals.

Monday was Germany's first knockout game since the 2014 final in Brazil, when the Germans beat Argentina 1-0. The Germans were eliminated in the group stage at the last two tournaments.

"We had very big plans for this World Cup. It's very difficult to disappoint again," Havertz said. "It was difficult to create chances and keep the pace."

Paraguay broke the early stalemate in the 42nd minute Monday with some perfect ball movement to set up Enciso.

Miguel Almiron split Germany's Aleksandar Pavlovic and Nathaniel Brown with a left-footed pass to Matias Galarza. Galarza sent a cross to Enciso, who was unmarked by Germany's defenders and easily headed it past Neuer.

In the second half, Havertz took a cross from Florian Wirtz, which he got just enough head on to redirect it past Gill.

Germany, whose 10 goals in the group stage was tied for the most of any team, struggled to find a way through Paraguay's 4-5-1 setup. The Germans had 78% of the possession in the first half.

Paraguay was without defender Omar Alderete, who left with an injury in the second half of its 0-0 draw against Australia. Canale started in his place.

Paraguay opened the World Cup with a 4-1 loss to the United States, then beat Turkey 1-0 while playing the entire second half with 10 men. A scoreless draw against Australia was good enough for Paraguay to reach the knockout stage as the third-place finisher from Group D.

3 firefighters killed in Western wildfire were trying to shield themselves from flames

By TY ONEIL, MATTHEW BROWN and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. (AP) — Three firefighters killed over the weekend in a wildfire along the Colorado-Utah border were trying to shield themselves from flames by deploying tent-like shelters when they were overcome, authorities said.

The firefighters were part of a specialized crew that goes into remote areas by helicopter to quickly put out new and rapidly escalating wildfires, federal officials said Monday.

Their deaths Saturday came almost 13 years to the day since an elite crew of 19 wildland firefighters died when they were trapped in a steep canyon in Yarnell, Arizona.

Like this weekend's victims, the men in Arizona tried to deploy emergency shelters that are a "last resort" for firefighters when there's no other way out. Investigators didn't blame anyone for the deaths in 2013, but cited radio communication problems that contributed to the Granite Mountain Hotshots becoming trapped. Arizona's workplace safety commission also fined the state's forestry division for not pulling them out.

Wildfires have erupted over the past week all across the West, fueled by months of dry weather and a record lack of snow in some places this past winter. Wildfire experts have warned for months that extreme fire dangers are likely this summer.

U.S. Wildland Fire Service Chief Brian Fennessy said he would not speculate about whether the crew overrun by the weekend fire in Colorado should have been where they were.

"I will say the fact that they were there was, I'm 100% sure, based on good decision-making," Fennessy said during a news conference Monday. "The fires in this region over the decades, you know, killed many firefighters. They weren't being foolish. They weren't being careless. They were there because they thought they could do what needed to be done to suppress that fire. And many times the weather changes."

With more than two dozen large fires burning, almost 8,000 wildland firefighters and dozens of firefighting helicopters have been deployed. About half the largest blazes are in Alaska while the rest are mostly in Western states.

Even as firefighting resources were increasingly strained, evacuations were ordered near seven fires, including in Arizona, Washington state, New Mexico and Utah. About 800 people living in and around the small town of Beulah in eastern Colorado were told to evacuate as a wildfire threatened the area on Monday afternoon, Gov. Jared Polis said.

"We're really at the mercy of the winds," Polis said.

Firefighters were part of a specialized crew

The U.S. Forest Service and Interior Department identified the firefighters killed as Emily Barker, 38, of Clinton Township, Michigan; Nick Hutcherson, 27, of Glendale, Arizona; and Sydney Watson, 26, of Warrior, Alabama.

Two others who were with them sustained burn injuries. They were in stable condition but remained hospitalized in the Denver area, officials said at Monday's news conference.

"The loss we experience here is not felt by just one agency. It is felt by an entire wildland fire community," Fennessy said. "We grieve together, we support one another and we continue the mission together."

A long line of fire trucks and vehicles from a wide array of emergency response agencies made their way slowly through Grand Junction, Colorado, Monday with their lights flashing. A scattering of people, some with their hands on their hearts, watched silently from the sidewalk as they passed.

The procession ended at a cemetery, and the bodies of two of the firefighters draped in American flags

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 59 of 84

were taken into a funeral home as officials from fire agencies saluted.

The three killed were assigned to a Helitack crew that can be dropped into remote areas by helicopters and whose mission is to prevent new fires from growing into out-of-control blazes. But it can be extremely dangerous, often taking place in areas where fires are rapidly expanding.

Watson worked for the Wildland Fire Service and the other two firefighters who died were assigned to the Forest Service. All were part of an interagency response to fires just west of Grand Junction.

The Snyder Fire in the area has burned about 44 square miles (114 square kilometers), authorities said.

Watson's death was the first within the the new Wildland Fire Service, which was created within the Department of Interior earlier this year to coordinate firefighting on public lands.

The deaths are being investigated by the Forest and Wildland Fire services, a process that typically results in recommendations for how to prevent or reduce the risk of a similar accident. Agencies can also convene an accident review board to suggest any further actions.

High wildfire threat for much of this week

More hot, dry and windy weather across the Southwest will elevate the fire threat at least until the weekend, according to the national Storm Prediction Center.

Among the concerns were high winds in the mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, in the Black Hills of South Dakota and across portions of the High Plains.

Utah already has restricted firework usage going into the July Fourth holiday.

The national "preparedness level" for wildfires was increased to a 4, on a scale of 1 to 5, the National Interagency Fire Center said Monday. That's a sign resources are beginning to be strained, and officials warned of a high potential for new, large fires in multiple parts of the country in coming days.

There are enough firefighting resources for now across the Rocky Mountains to deal with the blazes, said Mike Morgan, director of Colorado's Division of Fire Prevention and Control. But that could change quickly if conditions worsen in other parts of the country, Morgan said, adding that crews that battle fires on the ground already are in short supply.

"We know hand crews are always a hot commodity. We're getting a little short on those, so that would be one I would say we're a little concerned with," Morgan said. "At the moment, I would say I feel pretty good about where we're at, but I'm very concerned about where we go."

So far this year, wildfires have burned more than 4,800 square miles (12,400 square kilometers) — the most by this point in the year since 2022 and significantly above the 10-year average.

US and Iran pause strikes but disagree over next steps on talks

By JON GAMBRELL and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States and Iran on Monday separately announced they will send delegations to Qatar this week, though Tehran insisted it has not agreed to meet with the U.S. "at any level" after attacks across the Persian Gulf over the weekend challenged negotiations to end the war.

U.S. President Donald Trump said the Islamic Republic had requested a meeting with U.S. counterparts and that they planned to convene Tuesday in Doha, Qatar.

But one of Iran's senior negotiators denied talks had been scheduled. And the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry said Tehran was sending its delegation to Qatar, a key mediator in the negotiations, to discuss terms of the interim deal without involving the U.S.

Hostilities mounted in recent days in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil had been shipped before war began. After four days of trading strikes, both sides appeared to pause their attacks Monday.

The U.S. and Iran agreed to an interim deal earlier this month that calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of enriched uranium. It also waives U.S.-backed oil sanctions on the country, calls for free traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and gives each side 60 days to hammer out broader agreements.

Confusion mounts over next round of Iran-US talks

After Trump said Monday morning on social media that the U.S. and Iran planned to meet, White House

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 60 of 84

press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News' "Fox & Friends" that special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, were flying to Qatar.

Pakistan, also a key mediator, had said talks between Iran and the U.S. would resume Tuesday.

But Kazem Gharibabadi, a senior negotiator for Iran, said in comments published by Iranian state media that no talks had been confirmed. And Esmail Baghaei, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said that its delegation was traveling to Qatar this week to discuss the planned release of frozen Iranian assets and other issues related to the deal.

"There are no negotiation meetings with the U.S. side at any level scheduled in the coming days," Baghaei said.

However, that left open the possibility messages being passed to the Qataris between the two sides.

Increased tension in waterway vital to world energy supplies

During the war that began Feb. 28, Iran's attacks and threats stopped cargo ships and tankers from moving through the Strait of Hormuz, creating a global energy crisis.

In recent days, Iran has twice attacked vessels in the strait — including a tanker filled with Qatari crude — following efforts to open Oman's territorial waters to both inbound and outbound traffic from the Persian Gulf.

The attacks drew retaliatory American airstrikes and raised concerns that negotiations to reach a formal end to the war could be disrupted. Iran launched drone and missile attacks targeting Bahrain and Kuwait on Sunday.

The strait has long been considered an international waterway despite being in Iran and Oman's territorial waters.

The Trump administration was operating Monday on the understanding that the U.S. and Iran are standing down after the recent back-and-forth strikes and that vessels can move freely through the Strait of Hormuz, said a U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations.

Iran's president, U.S. official say \$6 billion coming to Iran

The U.S. official also said that Qatar planned to release \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets that would be used to purchase U.S. food products for the Iranian people.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had announced the expected release of funds earlier Monday in comments published by the state-run IRNA news agency.

Pezeshkian, a reformist within Iran's theocracy, is the highest-ranking official within Iran to reference the release of the funds held by Qatar.

Oman, Iran discuss possible fees for ships transiting the strait

Oman's foreign minister, Badr al-Busaidi, said Monday that Oman and Iran are considering charging service-related fees for commercial ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

Al-Busaidi said services could include water safety measures, pollution prevention, navigational assistance and preparedness for incidents such as fires. He told Radio Monte Carlo that Oman does not support imposing transit fees on ships.

"This is internationally forbidden," he said, "and we are abiding by these rules."

But there had never been any fees charged in the strait — and other Gulf Arab states and the U.S. firmly oppose the imposition of any costs for transit.

Iran and France clash over clearing mines from strait

An Iranian official warned France against "provocations" Monday after French President Emmanuel Macron posted on X that France and others were coordinating efforts to clear mines from the Strait of Hormuz.

Kazem Gharibabadi, an Iranian deputy foreign minister, said on X that under the interim deal "demining is carried out solely by Iran and by no other country."

Macron's post came after he greeted Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman ahead of high-level diplomatic talks in Paris.

Lebanon's president says it will deploy troops as part of deal with Israel

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun separately said Monday that Lebanon is determined to deploy troops

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 61 of 84

along its entire southern border as part of a framework agreement with Israel signed Friday. He made the remark while meeting with Adm. Brad Cooper, the top U.S. military commander in the Middle East.

The deal was rejected by the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, which triggered the latest war with Israel on March 2 when it fired rockets across Lebanon's southern border and into northern Israel.

The Israel-Lebanon deal calls for Hezbollah to be disarmed before Israel will withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon. Israel agreed to withdraw initially from a couple of "pilot zones" where the Lebanese army would then deploy, but no details have been shared about how that will work in practice.

Hezbollah officials have warned that attempts to implement the plan could lead to civil war.

Iran says this. The US says that. A look at the trickiest issues in the unresolved conflict

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

The United States and Iran have less than 60 days to negotiate a permanent end to the war, but they still seem to be at odds over the interim deal they reached this month.

It's not even clear when the two sides will meet again. "The situation is sensitive and complex," a senior Iranian negotiator, Kazem Gharibabadi, posted Monday on X.

Talks are just one of the pressing questions. Others include the Strait of Hormuz, which the U.S. says is open while Iran insists on a measure of control. The issue led both sides to carry out days of military strikes that appeared on Monday to have ended.

Here's a look at what both sides have said about key sticking points, including the ongoing fighting in Lebanon, and why the conflict is still far from resolved.

More talks are expected, at some point

WHAT THE U.S. SAYS:

"IRAN HAS REQUESTED A MEETING. IT WILL TAKE PLACE TOMORROW IN DOHA!" U.S. President Donald Trump posted on social media Monday.

WHAT IRAN SAYS:

"There are no negotiation meetings with the U.S. side at any level scheduled in the coming days," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Monday.

WHAT'S GOING ON:

The U.S. and Iran have a roughly mid-August deadline to reach a permanent peace deal including an agreement on Iran's disputed nuclear program.

What's ahead are technical talks involving lower-level diplomats before any return to the table by top negotiators. Mediators are eager to get going. Pakistan, a key mediator along with Qatar, has said talks would resume Tuesday.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News on Monday that envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, were flying to Qatar to meet with the Iranians and that technical negotiations would occur on the sidelines.

Later, Iranian state media cited Baghaei as saying an expert delegation will travel to Qatar this week but with no planned U.S. meetings.

There's plenty to discuss, including arrangements around the Strait of Hormuz, sanctions waivers on Iran and the future of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

But the deal says fighting must stop before further negotiations. After the exchange of fire over the weekend, Iran on Sunday threatened a "complete halt" in talks. On Monday, both sides appeared to pause their attacks. Tehran may be waiting to see if that holds.

The Strait of Hormuz is open for shipping, in theory

WHAT THE U.S. SAYS:

The Strait of Hormuz is open, according to the interim deal.

WHAT IRAN SAYS:

Iran insists it must govern the strait. "Any attempt to establish new or separate arrangements from

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 62 of 84

those currently being carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran will only lead to further complications, delay the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and increase the level of tension," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday.

WHAT'S GOING ON:

This AP explainer is a good start. But in short, Iran during the war discovered a powerful new source of leverage in the waterway that carried a fifth of the world's oil and gas before the conflict.

The interim deal says Iran should immediately facilitate commercial shipping through the strait that lies between it and Oman. It says Iran can work with Oman and other Persian Gulf countries to administer the waterway in line with international laws ensuring freedom of navigation.

Iran says shippers must use its designated routes and coordinate with its authorities. It has objected to a new route overseen by the U.S. that runs along Oman. That sparked the fighting over the weekend.

The Trump administration is operating on the understanding that the U.S. and Iran are standing down and vessels can move freely through the strait, a U.S. official said Monday on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations.

Ships have begun transiting again, but traffic is still below prewar levels.

Fighting has stopped on all fronts, in a way

WHAT IRAN SAYS:

Fighting must stop everywhere and Israel must withdraw from Lebanon before moving ahead on other issues.

WHAT HEZBOLLAH SAYS:

The Iranian-backed militant group will resist Israel's occupation of large parts of southern Lebanon, and linking Israel's withdrawal to Hezbollah's disarmament is a "very dangerous suggestion," Hezbollah leader Naim Kassem said Saturday.

WHAT ISRAEL SAYS:

Israeli forces will remain in southern Lebanon "until Hezbollah and the rest of the terrorist organizations are disarmed, and until no further threat to Israel is posed from Lebanon," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

WHAT'S GOING ON:

A separate set of U.S.-brokered talks have been held between Israel and Lebanon's government.

Iran says its interim deal with the U.S., which calls for a complete ceasefire in Lebanon, requires Israel to withdraw. But a separate U.S.-brokered agreement between Lebanon and Israel allows Israeli forces to stay in southern Lebanon until Hezbollah has been disarmed. Hezbollah was not part of those talks and has rejected that deal.

Hezbollah attacked Israel two days after it and the United States attacked Iran on Feb. 28. Israel responded with aerial bombardment and a ground invasion.

Israel has vowed to keep forces in southern Lebanon until Hezbollah's threat is eliminated. Lebanon's government does not have the capacity to disarm Hezbollah by force.

Sporadic clashes continued in Lebanon over the weekend. That could delay Iran's return to the negotiating table.

San Francisco Archdiocese agrees to pay \$395 million to settle child sex abuse lawsuits

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The San Francisco Catholic Archdiocese has agreed to pay \$395 million to settle more than 500 lawsuits alleging child sexual abuse by church officials, plaintiffs' attorneys said Monday.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone will have to write an apology letter to each survivor as part of the settlement.

The settlement also requires the archdiocese to implement a series of child protection and transparency reforms, including creating a list of clergy accused of abuse, said Jeff Anderson, an attorney representing

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 63 of 84

dozens of child sexual abuse victims.

The settlement comes three years after the archdiocese filed for bankruptcy and will cover approximately 530 survivors of child sexual abuse, Anderson said. It is the latest agreement over clergy sexual abuse claims. In 2024, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles agreed to a record \$880 million settlement.

Several archdioceses in California filed for bankruptcy after facing hundreds of lawsuits brought under a California law approved in 2019 that allowed decades-old claims to be filed by Dec. 31, 2022.

Cordileone, the archbishop, said in a statement that he believes the settlement provides "a path toward fair compensation for survivors who have borne the weight of this abuse for a lifetime."

"The hope is that this proposal will allow us collectively to move forward," he said.

"We accept full responsibility for what happened, and I sincerely apologize to all those who have been harmed," Cordileone added.

Margie O'Driscoll sued the archdiocese alleging she was sexually abused almost 50 years ago by a priest while she was a student at Marin Catholic High School in Kentfield, a community north of the Golden Gate Bridge. She said the settlement was hard-fought and puts the responsibility on church officials, not survivors.

"I, like every survivor, have carried this pain and shame along like a ball and chain for a very, very long time," O'Driscoll said during a news conference. "Ashamed and confused about what happened, scorned by the archdiocese, and sometimes not even believed by family and friends, and I think today shame is gonna change sides."

The San Francisco Archdiocese serves about 440,000 Catholics in the counties of San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo.

Anderson said a committee of survivors who spent thousands of hours over the last three years negotiating with Cordileone is empowered with establishing protocols on how to distribute the funds. He said every survivor will be given an opportunity to submit their story of abuse to an allocator hired by the committee to receive what Anderson said would be "an equitable distribution based on the unique circumstances of that survival."

Besides the funds, the archdiocese will be required to follow 14 child protection and transparency demands that include maintaining and making public a comprehensive, up-to-date list of all accused clergy that details allegations and the outcomes of investigations. The archdiocese will also be banned from imposing confidentiality agreements that silence survivors.

"I've been working with survivors for decades and I've never heard of anything quite as significant, as rigorous, as robust as what is being required of the Archdiocese of San Francisco," Anderson said.

Sweltering Midwest heat cancels outdoor plans as cooling centers open and the East braces

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Summer camps and other outdoor activities were canceled Monday as tens of millions of people across the Midwest endured a heat wave that is expected to spread eastward this week. Communities opened cooling centers and urged people to take it easy and stay hydrated.

Forty-seven million people across big chunks of the Midwest and parts of the Ohio Valley are under an extreme heat warning through at least Tuesday. Temperatures are forecast to reach the 90s, with heat index values, or "feels-like" temperatures, expected to top 100 degrees (37.8 degrees Celsius) in the region, according to the National Weather Service.

Visiting Des Moines with family, Rachel Washburn searched for things to do with kids during a heat wave. They landed at a water sprayground before lunch Monday, where her children played tag in the cool water.

"My kids were quite shocked at the heat and humidity," said Washburn of her seven children ages 18 months to 17 who had been used to more temperate weather farther north in Bemidji, Minnesota. "We were hoping for some good weather, but we'll make do."

About 56 million Americans are under an extreme heat watch as hot and humid weather is expected to move farther east later in the week, with some of the worst conditions expected by Thursday and Friday

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 64 of 84

in the Ohio Valley, the Mid-Atlantic and into the Northeast. Some areas could experience record-high temperatures, said Scott Kleebauer, a meteorologist with the Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

On Monday, cities and event planners were already announcing adjustments for or calling off events later in the week, including a farmer's market scheduled for Tuesday in DeWitt, Michigan; a movie screening Wednesday in Fairfield, Ohio; and Thursday's food truck festival in Warwick, New York.

The heat wave will also likely coincide with the Fourth of July holiday weekend, providing additional risk as more people have cookouts or watch fireworks outside for the 250th anniversary of American independence.

Kleebauer said the center recommends people stay hydrated and ensure access to shady areas and air conditioning.

Emergency workers were out in Nashville on Monday to offer water and check on people during the hottest time of the day.

Mike Russell, a captain at the Nashville Office of Emergency Management, said he saw many empty areas where people typically sleep outside, which he said was a good sign that they found someplace cool to escape the heat for a while.

Logan King, 29, brought a cart to fill up on cold water and snacks when the emergency workers came out to a patch of woods behind a Walmart where he and others sleep outside. The trees where people have pitched tents offer some cover from the direct sun, but not much relief.

"It's just miserable honestly, but this helps so much," King said. "Even with the shade and a tent ... it gets hot."

Extreme heat has also taken its toll in Europe, where temperature records were set and many heat-related deaths were reported in France.

People can be caught off guard by the first heat wave of the year, said Dr. Roy Elrod, chief of staff at DMC Detroit Receiving Hospital.

"You're happy winter's gone, you're ready to enjoy the summer, you've just been aching for it," Elrod said. "And so, I think we slip into kind of a position where we think it's got to be OK."

Heat-related injuries can happen in a matter of minutes, he said, especially to those who don't prepare for the weather by hydrating, wearing light clothing, avoiding the hottest times of the day and minimizing exposure to the sun.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison said it was closing 23 buildings to the public starting Tuesday, allowing only limited access to 11 others. It was relocating some summer classes after a broken water line at its cooling plant earlier this month severely reduced the ability to provide air conditioning across campus.

Temperatures approaching 90 degrees and high humidity didn't stop Toni Kreutzer, 28, from taking a walk Monday along the shores of Lake Mendota in Madison, Wisconsin, with her 13-year-old dog Chester.

"I like it hot," Kreutzer said. "I just don't like the humidity."

Virginia to allow recreational marijuana to be sold in retail stores beginning in 2027

By SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Five years after becoming the first Southern state to legalize possession of marijuana, Virginia has approved a legal way to sell it to recreational users.

State budget legislation enacted Monday will allow up to 350 cannabis shops to open across Virginia beginning July 1, 2027. The move marks the latest expansion of access to the drug — which remains illegal at the federal level — through state-level policymaking.

"Virginia legalized adult possession years ago, but without a regulated retail market, we left the illicit market to fill the gap," state Sen. Lashrecse Aird, a Democrat and legislative leader on the issue, said in a statement earlier this month. "This compromise gives us a smarter and safer path forward — one that protects consumers, keeps products tested and accurately labeled, and creates a legal marketplace that

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 65 of 84

is affordable and accessible enough to actually compete.”

Here’s what to know about Virginia’s new law, the long process of enabling retail sales and how the state’s changes fit into the national picture:

Virginia’s law allows new stores, higher possession limit

Virginia already had a medical marijuana program that allowed patients to purchase the drug through dispensaries. Now, state regulators will begin accepting applications for retail licenses on Feb. 1, ahead of the July 1, 2027, start date for recreational sales to adults 21 and older.

The law increases the state’s possession limit from 1 ounce to 2 ounces (28 grams to 57 grams) and it will continue to allow people to cultivate a small number of plants at home.

The state will levy an excise tax on top of its sales tax, and that mix is expected to generate about \$51 million in revenue for the state in the program’s first year, according to legislative budget documents.

Advocates of legalization are heralding the changes

Democrats have driven the state’s push toward legalization and recreational retail sales. They have cast the issue as a matter of equity after state data found Black Virginians were disproportionately policed and convicted of using marijuana. Only a sliver of the state’s Republican lawmakers have backed legalization, and many have raised public safety and health concerns.

Legalization advocates have generally cheered Virginia’s legislation, though many objected to a provision increasing the civil fine for public consumption, arguing it could again lead to disproportionate enforcement based on race.

Chelsea Higgs Wise, a grassroots organizer whose group Marijuana Justice was among those that called on Democratic Gov. Abigail Spanberger to rethink the increased fine, said the legislation was still an exciting development after years of uncertainty.

For the past five years, “Adults that want to reasonably consume have been confused, rightfully so,” she said.

Virginia is an outlier in the South

Marijuana is legal in most U.S. states for either medicinal or recreational use, with about half allowing it for recreational use, according to the Marijuana Policy Project, which advocates for legalization and tracks policy developments around the country.

Virginia remains an outlier in the South for its permissive approach.

Federal laws are at odds with state changes

Despite the fact that nearly all states permit some form of cannabis use, the U.S. government maintains its longstanding prohibition on the drug.

But in a major policy shift, the Trump administration in April announced it was reclassifying state-licensed medical marijuana as a less dangerous drug and accelerating the process for a broader reclassification.

How Virginia got here

During the 2010s, Virginia gradually expanded access to marijuana for medical treatment. Then, in 2021, Virginia became the first Southern state to legalize marijuana with the passage of a law that allowed adults 21 and over to possess and cultivate the drug.

But lawmakers didn’t fully enact a framework for retail sales outside of the state’s medical marijuana program. Partisan control of Virginia government flipped in November 2021, and the issue stalled out for years. In 2024, Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed a bill that would have established recreational retail sales.

Spanberger, who assumed office in January 2026, pledged support during her winning campaign for legislation setting up a retail market. While the governor did veto Democratic legislation that emerged from this year’s legislative session, she eventually worked out a compromise with lawmakers. Those provisions were rolled into a state budget bill that reached final passage Monday and now becomes law, according to the governor’s office, after lawmakers accepted all of Spanberger’s amendments.

Venezuelans search more earthquake ruins as attention turns to humanitarian crisis

By JUAN PABLO ARRAEZ and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela (AP) — With the window for finding survivors shrinking fast, Venezuelans combed Monday through more ruins of buildings toppled by last week's powerful back-to-back earthquakes, and attention turned to the country's humanitarian crisis that could persist for years.

Relief organizations say the first 72 hours after a natural disaster is the most crucial time period for rescues, though survival can be extended if people have access to food and water. Five days after the twin quakes, questions loomed about whether the cash-strapped government will be able to coordinate the effort needed to care for thousands of people who have been left homeless.

In other developments, a 4.6 magnitude aftershock rumbled through the disaster zone in the northern state of La Guaira.

The death toll stood at more than 1,700 people, according to the government, which has long retained tight control over news media.

Venezuelan government promotes its efforts

Facing criticism that authorities have done too little, too slowly, government officials aggressively promoted their recovery and rescue efforts. Police and military officers on Monday handed out cans of tuna and crackers to hungry displaced people in La Guaira.

In a speech, Jorge Rodríguez, the leader of the Venezuelan National Assembly and brother of acting President Delcy Rodríguez, said electricity had been restored to 90% of the hardest-hit state of La Guaira. He said authorities were racing to evaluate damaged buildings that still posed a danger and had set up 15 temporary displacement camps.

Many Venezuelan news reports have avoided politically delicate questions related to the earthquake, such as the widespread collapse of buildings, sticking instead to safer stories about heroic rescues. Delcy Rodríguez, who came to power in January after U.S. President Donald Trump's administration seized former President Nicolás Maduro, shared footage Monday of emergency workers lifting a man out of the ruins to applause after a 43-hour search effort.

"Each life saved is a victory for hope," she wrote on X.

Such bright spots are rare at the quake's epicenter, where families keep vigil at search sites.

"We have to stay strong, even without food, without sleep," said Ana Rada, watching as civil defense workers looked for her brother. "Until I see the body, I still have hope."

Aftershock rattles rescuers

After what the government said were more than 600 aftershocks since Wednesday's quakes, a moderate temblor on Monday struck 27 kilometers (17 miles) north of Caraballeda on Venezuela's Caribbean coast and measured 4.6 magnitude, according to the United States Geological Survey.

Jorge Rodríguez said there were no reports of damage, but the shock sent residents in the capital of Caracas screaming into the streets.

"Here we are again, back in the street. I don't know when we'll have a moment of true peace," said Concepción Hernández, 51, evacuating her apartment in the Chacao municipality of Caracas.

Questions over extent of US help

Dozens of countries have offered assistance. But the disaster has raised expectations for the Trump administration after its takeover of Venezuela's oil industry earlier this year.

In a briefing with reporters, a senior State Department official said 300 first responders sent from the U.S. are working on the ground and two dozen C-17 military transport planes arrive every day with supplies. Financial support from the U.S. now exceeds \$300 million.

The U.S. military is also assisting with repairs at the port in La Guaira to allow an influx of relief supplies by sea and manage air traffic after the quakes destroyed part of the control tower at Simón Bolívar International Airport in Caracas, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 67 of 84

It seemed unlikely, however, that the Trump administration would grant temporary humanitarian protections to Venezuelans as previous administrations have done for people from disaster-stricken countries already in the U.S. Such action was taken after earthquakes in 2010 in Haiti and 2001 in El Salvador.

Venezuelans have been a major focus of the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. More than 100 Venezuelans recently deported from the U.S. were being held at a hotel in the country when the quake hit, and many are now missing, survivors say.

Rescuers included a miner deported from the US

Among the rescuers digging through the rubble Monday was 31-year-old miner Jean Sosa, who said he was deported from the U.S. in January over a missed immigration court hearing and returned to Caracas last month, dazed by an odyssey that began in shackles at an Arizona immigration detention center.

He had built a new life in New York City over the past four years, he said, working at a taco stand near Penn Station, before Department of Homeland Security officials detained him. They ultimately shuttled him between immigration detention centers across the U.S. before leaving him and a busload of other deportees in southern Mexico without his passport, phone or wallet. He then paid his way back to Venezuela.

Since arriving Wednesday in La Guaira, Sosa has scrambled to pull people from the rubble with his old mining pickaxe in the absence of national rescue teams.

"Many people could have been saved if there had been equipment and support from top authorities from the very beginning," he told The Associated Press, wearing a helmet and a black T-shirt splashed with dust in the port city where he said he had already rescued 20 people alive.

Those rescues heartened him, he said, despite the lack of supplies. "We're working without gloves, without equipment, borrowing supplies, improvising bandages and whatever else we can."

The full scale of damage remains unclear

Experts are struggling to assess the scope of damage, but they generally agree that the government's figures are a vast undercount.

Many Venezuelans are skeptical of official pronouncements, particularly since Maduro's government claimed victory in the 2024 presidential election despite a vote count showing he had lost to the opposition movement led by María Corina Machado.

The now-exiled opposition leader has criticized the government response to the earthquake and on Monday accused it of temporarily closing the airspace to prevent her from returning to the country. She did not offer evidence.

Jorge Rodríguez said that as of Monday, the earthquake had affected a total of 15,866 people. The United Nations, meanwhile, says that up to 6.8 million of Venezuela's nearly 30 million residents may be affected — which could mean being displaced or losing access to electricity and water. The Venezuelan Red Cross said it expected to address the needs of at least 300,000 people for the next two years.

While Rodríguez said the number of damaged or collapsed buildings had reached 855, a preliminary assessment by NASA put that number at 58,870 buildings. The assessment relied on radar imagery from the European Space Agency's Sentinel-1 satellites, which can detect changes to infrastructure.

The updates to government figures are given in brief televised announcements where journalists have no opportunity to ask questions or request more details. In another obstacle to coverage, the Venezuelan press union said Monday that the Ministry of Communication was blocking access to La Guaira for at least some foreign reporters for 48 hours.

It said the ministry cited the need "to reduce noise during rescue operations." The union urged the government to drop the restriction: "As hours pass, the health situation may worsen, and the country needs verified and timely information."

Because of the chaos and poor phone service, many Venezuelans have turned to non-governmental digital databases to report their loved ones as missing. More than 50,000 people were reported missing on one such database, though it is unclear how many have been found.

Firefighter Kleider Carrillo said nothing prepared him for the destruction in La Guaira.

"When you study for this profession, you're trained for situations like this," he said. "But what's in text-

books is one thing. Reality is another."

Nursing gains 'professional' label for student loans after judge's ruling, but theology now dropped

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Students pursuing graduate degrees in nursing, physical therapy and several other fields will be eligible to take out higher federal student loan amounts — at least for now — after a federal judge blocked part of a Trump administration rule that held them to lower limits.

The U.S. Education Department issued a revised rule on Monday designed to follow the judge's order from last week, officials told The Associated Press. Agency officials called it a temporary change while they fight in court to keep the original rule, which defined medicine, law and other fields as "professional programs" but excluded fields such as nursing.

The department disagrees with the judge's order but will comply, even as officials plan to prevail in the case over which degrees are defined as "professional," Undersecretary Nicholas Kent said in a statement. "We will continue to make the case that the definition is both lawful and appropriate," he said.

The change represents a short-term win for groups that sued to stop the rule. Eight groups challenged the department's definition in court, representing nurse practitioners, therapists, speech language pathologists and more.

But in strictly applying the judge's order, the department is now striking some degrees from the list of professional programs, meaning those students will face lower loan limits. Theology studies programs are among the biggest to shift from professional to non-professional degrees in the shuffle, subjecting theology students to a lower student loan limit. The master of divinity degree — a common degree for pastors and ministers — remains on the professional list, with a more generous student loan limit.

The new rule, which takes effect Wednesday, comes from a student loan overhaul passed in President Donald Trump's tax bill last year. Programs designated as professional degrees face federal loan caps of \$200,000, while other graduate programs are capped at \$100,000.

Previously, graduate students had been able to take out federal loans up to the full cost of their degree. Trump officials pushed for new loan caps to rein in student debt and lower tuition prices that they said had grown out of control.

The groups that brought the lawsuit said the rule would require students to forgo their studies or take out riskier private loans. Although many graduate nursing degrees fall within the lower loan limits, some can cost more than \$100,000, including in high-demand fields like nurse anesthesia.

In a notification to universities on Monday, the Education Department said it's confident the Trump administration's initial rule will ultimately be upheld in court. The amended rule is expected to remain in effect during the judge's preliminary stay, but the department warned that it "may change as litigation in the case proceeds."

The original rule included about a dozen programs that were deemed professional, which Trump officials had said was not a judgment on their importance but part of a technical definition dating to the 1960s. Along with law and medicine, that list also included theology, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, clinical psychology and more.

The temporary rule expands that list to 29 specific degree programs, including master of science in nursing, doctor of nursing practice, and doctor of nurse anesthesia practice. Others newly added to the professional list include degrees for physical therapy, athletic training, speech-language pathology, physician associates and anesthesiologist assistants.

The department's communication listed about 25 programs that are now considered non-professional degrees. Along with theology, that list now includes applied psychology, pharmaceutical sciences and others. (The doctor of pharmacy degree remains professional.)

Last week's court ruling blocked parts of the Education Department's definition that were added in a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 69 of 84

federal rulemaking process. U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell in Washington called it a "misguided" interpretation that strayed from a longstanding definition created by Congress.

The department's definition laid out several criteria used to weigh if degrees count as professional programs. It said those degrees generally take six years to complete and require licenses to begin practicing, among other requirements.

It also said professional degrees cannot lead to employment that must be "be supervised by another professional" with "more education, training, and qualifications."

A separate lawsuit filed by a coalition of Democratic-led states challenging the loan caps is still pending.

Shooting in northern Germany leaves 6 people dead. Suspected shooter arrested

BERLIN (AP) — A shooting at a youth welfare facility in northern Germany on Monday left six people dead in what officials believe may have stemmed from a custody dispute. The suspected shooter was arrested.

Five people — four women and one man — died at the scene of the shooting in Stade, police said. A sixth, also an adult, died later at a hospital. All six were employees of the youth center or its affiliates, they said.

"The police are investigating the motive and the exact course of events under high pressure," Daniela Behrens, interior minister for the Lower Saxony region, told a news conference, adding that it was an extremely violent crime in cold blood, "apparently in a custody dispute."

Police said several people were wounded, some of them seriously, German news agency dpa reported, but they did not give a specific figure or information on the victims' identity.

Police said the shooting took place in the facility on Dankersstrasse, a street south of the town center. The facility includes temporary accommodation for pregnant women or young mothers with children.

A main suspect was arrested, while another two people were subject to "police measures" on suspicion of involvement, police said in a statement. They didn't elaborate.

Video footage after the shooting showed a large police presence, along with other emergency service personnel and several ambulances on a residential street.

Germany's gun laws are more restrictive than those in the United States, and mass shootings are rare but not unheard of.

Vitali Mertens, who lives across the street from the scene, said he heard gunshots and "the whole area was cordoned off right away."

Stade has about 50,000 inhabitants and is located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Hamburg.

Supreme Court says Fed's Cook can keep her job for now, but it upholds other Trump firings

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday dramatically expanded presidential power, upholding President Donald Trump's firings of the heads of independent federal agencies with one important exception: the Federal Reserve.

The justices allowed Fed governor Lisa Cook to stay in her job while she fights the Republican president's effort to fire her over allegations of mortgage fraud, which she has denied.

But other than at the nation's central bank, with its role of setting interest rates, the court held that presidents have free rein to fire agency heads at will, despite federal laws that require a cause for such dismissals and a 91-year-old decision that had limited executive authority.

With the six conservative justices in the majority, the nine-member court jettisoned its unanimous decision in *Humphrey's Executor* that had limited when presidents can fire agencies' board members — in part to try to ensure decision-making free of political influence.

"We hold that such protection from removal is contrary to the separation of powers enshrined in the Constitution," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 70 of 84

Support for Trump's position

The justices ruled in the case of former Federal Trade Commission member Rebecca Slaughter, whom Trump fired without cause despite a provision of federal law that requires a reason. The logic of the decision extends to other agencies, including the National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, where Trump also has fired board members.

Trump voiced his approval in a Truth Social post. "It is such an Honor to be the sitting President who won this Historic and Unprecedented Ruling, one of the most important ever given with respect to Presidential Powers," he wrote.

The court already had signaled its support for the Trump administration's position, over the liberals' objection, by allowing Slaughter and the board members of other agencies to be removed from their jobs even as their legal challenges continued.

No president before Trump had sought to wrest control of the agencies that regulate wide swaths of American life, including nuclear energy, product safety and labor relations. But at arguments in Slaughter's case in December, the six conservatives, including three appointed by Trump, seemed more concerned about issuing a ruling that would endure than handing too much power to Trump.

Their rhetoric was reminiscent of the presidential immunity case in 2024 that allowed Trump to avoid prosecution for his efforts to undo his 2020 presidential election loss to Democrat Joe Biden. The court is writing a decision "for the ages," Justice Neil Gorsuch said then.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, in a dissent she summarized aloud in the courtroom, said the ruling could lead to "submission, instability, and even oppression."

"The president, to be sure, emerges with more power than ever before. That power was given to him by six justices on this court, not the people or the Constitution," Sotomayor said.

Fed governor Cook's case

In Cook's case, the court voted 5-4 to reject the Trump administration's effort to get Cook out of her job now. Roberts, Justice Brett Kavanaugh and the three liberal justices were in the majority.

Allowing Cook to be ousted now, Roberts wrote, "would allow the President to remove a member of the Federal Reserve at any time, for any reason, without any notice before, and without any judicial check after. That would turn for-cause protection into little more than at-will employment."

Roberts did include a footnote in his opinion noting that nothing forbids Trump from "trying again" to fire her, provided she is given proper notice and a chance to contest it.

Trump suggested he would take Roberts up on the offer, saying on Truth Social that "we will take appropriate action immediately to make sure that someone who has committed wrongdoing will not be making vital decisions concerning the Welfare of the United States of America!"

Cook, who was nominated to the Fed's Board of Governors by Biden, can continue in her post at least as long as her lawsuit challenging her firing goes on, the court said. The Trump administration is appealing a lower-court ruling in her favor.

Besides trying to fire Cook, Trump had threatened to fire former Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell if he didn't leave the board when his term as chairman ended in mid-May. Powell has remained as a governor, even as Kevin Warsh has replaced him as chairman.

Judges on lower courts have allowed Cook to remain in her post as one of seven central bank governors.

The true motivation for trying to fire Cook, Trump's critics say, is the Republican president's desire to exert control over U.S. interest rate policy. If Trump succeeds in removing Cook, the first Black woman to be a Federal Reserve governor, he could replace her with his own appointee and gain a majority on the Fed's board. The case is being closely watched by Wall Street investors and could have broad impacts on the financial markets and the U.S. economy.

Cook said her case was "never about mortgage documents signed years before I became a Federal Reserve governor."

"It was an attempt to remove me on a manufactured pretext because I refused to bow to political pressure and continued to set interest rates based only on what would best serve the American people. That

is the most fundamental obligation of a Federal Reserve governor," Cook said in a statement.

Trump's confrontation with the Fed

Trump has been dismissive of worries that cutting rates too quickly could trigger higher inflation. He wants dramatic reductions so the government can borrow more cheaply and Americans can pay lower borrowing costs for new homes, cars or other large purchases, as worries about high costs have soured some voters on his economic management.

The Fed has left its key rate unchanged this year, but a growing chorus of policymakers is expressing concern about persistently high inflation and suggesting the central bank could raise its benchmark rate by the end of this year or leave it unchanged.

While Cook's case was under review at the high court, Trump dramatically escalated his confrontation with the Fed. The Justice Department opened a criminal investigation of Powell and served the central bank with subpoenas.

The investigation ended in late April, the department said. The announcement cleared a major roadblock to the confirmation of Warsh as Powell's successor.

The case against Cook stems from allegations she claimed two properties, in Michigan and Georgia, as "primary residences" in June and July 2021, before she joined the Fed board. Such claims can lead to a lower mortgage rate and smaller down payment than if one of them was declared as a rental property or second home.

Those applications, Solicitor General D. John Sauer said in January, are evidence of "gross negligence at best" and give Trump reason to fire her. In any event, he argued, courts shouldn't be reviewing his decision and Cook has no right to a hearing.

Cook has denied any wrongdoing and has not been charged with a crime.

Former NBA players Malik Beasley, Ed Davis are latest to be charged in gambling scandal

By ED WHITE Associated Press

Former NBA player Malik Beasley has been indicted in the government's sprawling investigation of illicit gambling on basketball games, accused of tailoring his 2024 performance with the Milwaukee Bucks to reward bettors and chip away at his own financial problems, authorities said Monday.

Beasley has been out of the NBA since playing with the Detroit Pistons in 2024-25. Another former NBA player, Ed Davis, was also charged in the indictment unsealed in Brooklyn federal court against six people.

U.S. Attorney Joseph Nocella Jr. said they "turned professional basketball into a criminal betting operation."

The schemes, he added, "erode the integrity of American sports and victimize the sports-watching public."

Nocella said hundreds of thousands of dollars were wagered through popular gambling sites. The indictment says Beasley had financial woes, including millions of dollars in gambling losses, and had relied on Davis, a former teammate, for help.

"Malik maintains his presumption of innocence throughout this two-year investigation," Beasley's attorney, Steve Haney, said. "We ask that people reserve judgment until all the facts are known."

Feds say Beasley tipped others about his play

In return for fixing his performance, Beasley got paid by his money-winning co-conspirators and his debts to Davis were reduced or eliminated, the indictment alleges.

In one example, according to the court filing, Beasley informed Davis that he would try to outperform the 3.5 prop line bet for rebounds in Milwaukee's game against the Los Angeles Clippers on March 10, 2024.

With a second left, and the Bucks ahead by seven points, any shot by the Clippers would not have affected the outcome. But Beasley challenged the shot and then dashed past four players to grab the rebound as the horn sounded.

Beasley finished with four rebounds that night — an overperformance and a winning prop bet, the indictment states.

"What's funny is after he got it he had a big sigh of relief," a co-conspirator said in a text message, ac-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 72 of 84

cording to the indictment.

In other games, Beasley told Davis that he would underperform certain statistics, the government alleges. The NBA said it would continue to cooperate with authorities.

"We take these allegations with the utmost seriousness, and the integrity of our game remains our top priority," spokesperson Mike Bass said.

Investigation has kept Beasley on sidelines

Beasley last played in the NBA for the Pistons in 2025, averaging 16 points per game. He is one of five players in NBA history with more than 300 3-pointers in a season, but he did not play in the league last season because of the investigation.

Beasley's financial problems have been widely reported, including disputes with a Detroit landlord, a Milwaukee barber and a Minnesota dentist. In 2025, when the Pistons were in New York for a playoff game, he was served with a lawsuit from a local sports marketing agency, which subsequently got a \$1 million default judgment against Beasley.

Davis' attorney did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment. He was an NBA journeyman who was primarily a backup in a 12-year career that got him roughly \$48 million in gross salary. Davis and Beasley were teammates in Minnesota in 2020-21.

Paolo Zamorano, a sports agent who formerly represented Davis, was also charged with placing bets based on Beasley's information. Defense attorney Ken Breen said Zamorano denies wrongdoing and "looks forward to his day in court."

Other NBA figures arrested in 2025

Authorities last fall announced a gambling sweep that led to the arrests of more than 30 people, including reputed mobsters and well-known basketball figures such as Chauncey Billups, a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame and coach of the Portland Trail Blazers at the time.

Billups is accused of conspiring to fix high-stakes card games tied to La Cosa Nostra organized crime families that cheated unsuspecting gamblers out of at least \$7 million. He has pleaded not guilty.

In April, former NBA player Damon Jones, 49, became the first person to plead guilty. He was accused of defrauding major sportsbooks, including DraftKings and FanDuel, and filching millions of dollars from unwitting poker players.

Jones was charged with selling or attempting to sell insider information to bettors based on his relationships in the NBA.

Terry Rozier is accused of conspiring with friends to help them win bets on his performance during a 2023 game when he played for the Charlotte Hornets. He, too, has pleaded not guilty. He was on the Miami Heat when he was charged in 2025.

In 2024, former Toronto Raptors player Jontay Porter pleaded guilty in a separate gambling case. Porter, who had gambling debts, said he took himself out of games early so co-conspirators could win bets on his performance.

Gabriel Martinelli scores late in injury time to help Brazil beat Japan 2-1 at World Cup

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — With Brazil trailing for much of the game and with extra time looming, Gabriel Martinelli came through in a big, big way at the World Cup.

Martinelli entered the game as a second-half substitute and put an end to Japan's near-upset on Monday, scoring the winning goal late in injury time to give five-time champion Brazil a 2-1 victory and a spot in the round of 16.

The result was a showcase of Brazil's Italian connections. Martinelli holds dual citizenship in Italy and Brazil, and the man who made the decision to change the team's makeup was Carlo Ancelotti, an Italian who is the first European to coach the South American country's national team.

"Above all else we wanted to freshen up the field because Martinelli has a lot of intensity as a player,"

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 73 of 84

Ancelotti said through a translator. "When he goes in the match he's always on his top game."

Brazil will next face either the Ivory Coast or Norway on Sunday in East Rutherford, New Jersey, in the round of 16.

"We can never be content with what we're doing," Ancelotti said. "We're doing a good job. We are performing. But you can never be content because we want to play better. We want to play at the highest level."

Casemiro had earlier equalized for Brazil on a header in the 56th minute off an assist from Gabriel Magalhães after just missing another chance two minutes earlier. The shot sailed just out of the reach of the outstretched hand of Japan goalkeeper Zion Suzuki and into the net.

Kaishu Sano stole a misplaced pass at midfield and took it down the field before a right-footed shot from above the half circle put Japan ahead in the 29th minute.

"There is not not making mistakes because nobody is perfect," Ancelotti said. "But you have to overcome it and you have to push it forward. The team did a good job of that in the second half."

Vinícius Júnior, who has scored four goals so far in this year's tournament, had a chance to put Brazil on top in the 58th minute but his shot from the left box was deflected by Suzuki and went off the far post.

Casemiro left in the first minute of second-half stoppage time with what appeared to be a leg injury.

Brazil had two chances to even the score early in the second half before breaking through. On the first one, Suzuki blocked a header from Bruno Guimarães in the 52nd minute. Soon after, Casemiro's header bounced off a defender's head and Suzuki's face. Suzuki finished with four saves.

Brazil great Neymar didn't play Monday after making his first appearance for the team since 2023 in the last game against Scotland. He played only 14 minutes in that 3-0 win after missing the first two group matches at the World Cup with a right calf injury.

"I was seriously considering putting him on the pitch," Ancelotti said. "In the end, we did not need him."

Japan has never won a knockout match at the World Cup, going 0-4 in the round of 16 — including also taking the lead the last two times in 2018 and 2022 before losing.

The win was Brazil's 12th in 15 games against Japan. The teams have also played to two draws while Japan got its first win in the series in a friendly in Tokyo in October.

"The gap between us is closing now," Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said through a translator. "Brazil is a top-tier team and we're definitely approaching that level."

Then he mentioned the loss in Qatar four years ago before adding: "We have to up our game."

This was a matchup between two countries with deep ties, with Brazil being home to about 2.7 million Japanese descendants, which is the largest Japanese population outside of Japan.

Those ties extend to soccer where Brazil superstar Zico moved to Japan in 1991 to play for Kashima Antlers and help build Japan's professional soccer network. He coached the Japan national team from 2002-06, leading the team to the World Cup in 2006.

That team lost to Brazil 4-1 in the only previous meeting between the teams at the World Cup.

Brazil won Group C after a draw with Morocco and victories over Haiti and Scotland. Monday's victory came on the anniversary of their first World Cup championship in Sweden in 1958, when a 17-year-old Pele scored two goals in the final against the host country.

Japan reached the round of 32 as runner-up in Group F after a draws with the Netherlands and Sweden and a win over Tunisia. The loss snaps a 10-game unbeaten streak dating back to a 2-0 loss to the United States in September.

Professor known for 'torture memos' will advise conspiracy probe focused on perceived Trump foes

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A law professor known for his expansive views of presidential power and for decades-old memos that justified harsh interrogation techniques after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks says he will be advising a team of prosecutors investigating whether former law enforcement and intelligence officials conspired against President Donald Trump.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 74 of 84

John Yoo confirmed in an email to The Associated Press on Monday that he would be assisting Joe diGenova in an ongoing investigation into whether officials who over the last decade scrutinized Trump participated in a criminal conspiracy against the Republican president.

"He's a lawyer. He's going to be helping us," diGenova said in a brief telephone interview about Yoo. diGenova served as the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia between 1983 and 1988 and was enlisted in April to return to government as a counselor to the attorney general.

A law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Yoo was a senior Justice Department official in the George W. Bush administration who served as an author of the so-called "torture memos" that government officials used to justify using "enhanced interrogation" techniques on potential terror suspects. The Justice Department later rescinded the memos.

In the years since, he's remained a prominent proponent of broad executive authority, telling the AP in 2020 that he had told Trump administration officials that a Supreme Court ruling that rejected Trump's effort to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, opened the door to enormous new presidential power.

The conspiracy investigation is being conducted in Florida, but the scope is unclear, as is whether any criminal charges will be brought.

Prosecutors have centered at least part of the probe on the long-concluded investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Investigators have issued a broad swath of subpoenas to former officials for records and conducted interviews related to the creation of an intelligence community assessment, released in January 2017, that found that Russia engaged in wide-ranging election interference to boost Trump over his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton.

A 2019 report by special counsel Robert Mueller affirmed that Russia interfered on Trump's behalf and that the Trump campaign repeatedly welcomed the assistance, but it did not find sufficient evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy between Moscow and the campaign.

Several subsequent investigations into the Russia probe have identified multiple errors into how it was conducted, and a former FBI lawyer pleaded guilty in 2020 to doctoring an email during the course of the inquiry. But none of the reviews have identified criminal misconduct by any senior law enforcement or intelligence official involved in the investigation.

Trump has nonetheless continued to demand retribution and has sought to punish top officials from that time at the FBI and CIA.

Asked in a Fox News Channel interview in May what the Justice Department had done to address claims of a long-running conspiracy to bring down Trump, acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said, "That's exactly what we're investigating right now."

Yoo's involvement in the investigation was earlier reported by Politico and CNN.

Luigi Mangione gets stuck in an elevator as judge delays his federal trial until January

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, LARRY NEUMEISTER and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Luigi Mangione's federal trial in the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson will now begin in January instead of the fall, a judge said Monday at a hearing that started late because Mangione got stuck in a courthouse elevator.

U.S. District Judge Margaret Garnett said she was postponing the federal trial so Mangione's lawyers can focus on his state murder trial, which is scheduled to begin on Sept. 8.

Jury selection in the federal case will begin on Jan. 5, instead of Oct. 13, followed by opening statements and testimony on Jan. 25, instead of Nov. 4, Garnett said at a hearing in Manhattan.

Garnett said she will not release the questionnaire that prospective jurors will be required to fill out until after the panel is chosen. Having it circulating online for months before jury selection "would only make what promises to be a difficult task more difficult," she said.

Wearing a beige jail suit, Mangione looked bemused as a pair of deputy U.S. Marshals led him into the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 75 of 84

courtroom about 20 minutes after the hearing was supposed to start. He briefly gazed at the courtroom gallery, where about two dozen of his supporters were sitting.

"Mangione was late due to elevator problems," the court said in a statement.

It was the second mishap involving Mangione's arrival to a court hearing in recent weeks.

A June 16 hearing in the state case was delayed a day after prosecutors failed to inform his jail that he was needed in court.

Garnett said she had hoped "with perhaps undue optimism" to hold the federal trial in the fall but that "we can no longer wait to see what happens" in the state case.

"In my view it's simply impossible to be moving through the jury selection process in this case while the defendant and his counsel are fully occupied by conducting the state trial," Garnett said.

Mangione's lawyers declined to comment to reporters afterward.

Mangione has pleaded not guilty to state and federal charges in the Dec. 4, 2024, killing. He could spend his life in prison if convicted in either case.

The 28-year-old Ivy League graduate appeared energetic and engaged during Monday's brief hearing. He watched intently at times, knitting his fingers and resting his chin on them.

He spoke animatedly with his lawyers, Karen Friedman Agnifilo and Marc Agnifilo, before the proceeding began, gesturing with his hands as he sat between them at the defense table.

Mangione's federal charges allege that he traveled across state lines by bus to stalk and kill Thompson. He's accused of using a cellphone, the internet and interstate highways, among other means, while planning and carrying out the attack, as well as staying at a hostel that serves out-of-state customers.

At a hearing in the state case in February, Mangione spoke out against the prospect of two trials, telling the judge: "It's the same trial twice. One plus one is two. Double jeopardy by any commonsense definition."

Mangione's lawyers had argued that back-to-back trials on a compressed timeline would violate his constitutional rights.

Thompson, 50, was killed as he walked to a Manhattan hotel for UnitedHealth Group's annual investor conference.

Surveillance video showed a masked gunman shooting him from behind. Police say "delay," "deny" and "depose" were written on the ammunition, mimicking a phrase used to describe how insurers avoid paying claims.

Mangione was arrested five days later at a McDonald's in Altoona, Pennsylvania, about 230 miles (370 kilometers) west of Manhattan.

In January, Garnett took the death penalty off the table but ruled that prosecutors could use items collected from Mangione's backpack during his arrest as evidence against him.

They included a 3D-printed pistol that investigators said matched the one used to kill Thompson and a notebook in which authorities say Mangione described his intent to "wack" an insurance executive.

Earlier this month, Mangione's lawyers said they would pursue a psychiatric defense in the state case, but reversed course a day later. The defense, involving claims that he was suffering from extreme emotional disturbance at the time of the killing, isn't allowed in federal court.

Mangione has become a cause célèbre for people upset with the health insurance industry.

An online fundraiser for his legal defense fund has raised more than \$1.5 million and his court appearances have attracted a cadre of supporters, some of whom have worn "FREE LUIGI" T-shirts and green clothing — the color worn by the Mario Bros. video game character Luigi.

Comcast plans to split into two public companies by spinning off NBCUniversal and Sky

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Communications giant Comcast is planning to split itself into two: one media-centered business that would include brands like NBCUniversal and Sky and a separate company focused on broadband and wireless services.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 76 of 84

In a Monday announcement, Comcast said the breakup will put both of these operations in a better position to pursue their own priorities and growth. The move arrives as communications companies continue to wrestle with years of cord-cutting, and shifting habits in how consumers now buy subscriptions for anything from their phone plans to streaming budgets more broadly.

"The world is changing faster than ever," Comcast Chairman and co-CEO Brian Roberts said on a Monday call — adding that it "has become clear" the company's technology and media businesses each "have compelling opportunities in front of them that are distinct in nature and best pursued with dedicated focus."

Upon the spinoff's completion, both businesses would become their own publicly-traded companies. Comcast said it expects to complete the process in about a year, pending regulatory approvals and a final greenlight from its board.

That means consumers shouldn't feel immediate impacts. But a host of major brands currently sit under Comcast's umbrella — from internet and wireless provider Xfinity to streaming platform Peacock, NBC News and Universal Studios. And analysts are eyeing what those businesses could look like farther down the road.

What could be in store for NBCUniversal and Comcast

"In the short term, bundles, pricing, and distribution will likely hold," said Mike Proulx, a vice president and research director at market research firm Forrester. For NBCUniversal — set to head the media-centered company Comcast is spinning off — the split in itself carries little effect on its current business, he noted, and is "more to do with what it becomes longer term."

Proulx is bracing for future acquisitions in this space, adding that "Comcast is following a playbook we have already seen." He pointed to Warner Bros. Discovery, which announced its own intention to split just last June — before becoming a takeover target that erupted into a messy tug-of-war between Netflix and Skydance-owned Paramount. Paramount eventually became victorious, and is now edging closer to closing its \$81 billion buyout of Warner's entire company.

Comcast executives have appeared to so far dismiss the possibility of heading toward a similar fate. When asked on Monday's call whether investors should view the separation as a step toward "potential strategic transactions" for either business, Roberts said: "Absolutely not."

His co-CEO Mike Cavanagh — who is set to become the chief executive of the NBCUniversal spinoff — echoed that sentiment. Cavanagh reiterated plans to "build and invest for growth" with more freedom as a standalone business.

Still, analysts like Proulx speculate that even if NBCUniversal doesn't become a takeover target, "it'll likely be the company doing the acquiring."

"As it stands, traditional TV is dying, and Peacock alone isn't enough to compete at scale against the biggest streaming services," Proulx said via email. "One way or the other, NBCU's entertainment business will look different within the next couple of years."

This isn't the first spinoff for Comcast

Like other companies, Comcast in recent years has shifted its business emphasis away from traditional cable toward streaming and other sources of revenue, such as its movie studio, theme parks and home wireless and internet services.

NBCUniversal includes that theme parks division, Universal film and television studios, NBC and Telemundo networks, Peacock, and Bravo — and with the spinoff, European media business Sky will also be part of that portfolio led by Cavanagh.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia-based Comcast will continue providing internet services to residential and business customers. Comcast's former Chief Financial Officer Michael Angelakis will become the CEO of that company following its separation.

Comcast has split off assets before. Monday's move arrives just months after the company officially completed its separation of Versant Media Group — which, as first announced in November 2024, is the new home of networks like USA, Oxygen, E!, SYFY and Golf Channel, as well as CNBC and MSNBC (now MS NOW). Movie ticketing platform Fandango and the Rotten Tomatoes movie rating site were also included.

Once the latest split is complete, Comcast shareholders will own shares in both Comcast and NBCUni-

versal. Comcast expects to keep a stake of up to 19.9% ownership position in NBCUniversal for up to one year after the spinoff is complete.

Comcast jumped more than 6% as of midday trading following Monday's announcement. Shares still are down over 10% since the start of 2026.

Supreme Court rules states can count late-arriving mailed ballots, rejecting Trump-led challenge

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that states can count ballots that arrive after Election Day, a persistent target of President Donald Trump.

The 5-4 decision rejected a Republican-led attack on laws in more than half the states and the District of Columbia that permit mailed ballots to arrive and be counted some number of days after the election, provided they are postmarked by Election Day. The outcome spares officials the headache of changing their ballot rules just a few months before the 2026 midterm congressional elections.

In just over half those states, the more forgiving deadlines apply only to ballots cast by military and overseas voters.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote the court's majority opinion, joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and the three liberal justices.

Federal laws setting a single Election Day "leave open when those votes must be received," Barrett wrote.

Congress could change the law, she said. "If varied deadlines for ballot receipt similarly call for a national solution, the American people must choose it through their elected representatives," Barrett wrote.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote the dissent for four justices. "Not only is today's decision inconsistent with statutory text, legal context, historical practice, and precedent; it also threatens to produce lamentable consequences," Alito wrote. "The majority's holding spawns a slurry of troubling election-law questions and risks further undermining Americans' confidence in election integrity."

The legal challenge was part of Trump's broader attack on most mail balloting, which he has said breeds fraud despite strong evidence to the contrary and years of experience in numerous states. Trump has repeatedly claimed that his loss to Joe Biden in 2020 resulted from fraud even though more than 60 court decisions and his own attorney general said that argument had no merit.

Trump called the court ruling a "tremendous loss" and renewed his call for Congress to pass the SAVE America Act, which has made it through the House of Representatives but not the Senate.

"There is only one reason to oppose — CHEATING!" Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Among other changes, the legislation would limit who is able to receive a mail ballot and impose a documentary proof-of-citizenship requirement for registering to vote.

"If we want fair and secure elections, Election Day should mean exactly what it says, which is why this decision makes it even more imperative that Congress pass the SAVE America Act," RNC Chairman Joe Gruters said in a statement.

The court heard arguments in March in a case from Mississippi pitting the state against Trump's Republican administration and the Republican and Libertarian parties. At issue was whether federal law sets a single Election Day that requires ballots to be both cast by voters and received by state officials.

The federal appeals court in New Orleans struck down a Mississippi law allowing ballots to be counted if they arrive within five business days of the election and are postmarked by Election Day.

The outcome is a "sigh of relief" for a lot of election administrators, said Stephen Richer, a Republican and the former top election administrator in Arizona's Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix.

A ruling in favor of the Republican National Committee "would have created a whole host of administrative challenges for the affected states," said Richer, who is now a legal fellow at the Cato Institute.

RNC officials did not immediately respond Monday to email and telephone requests for comment.

Supreme Court rejects Trump's push to toss \$5 million verdict in E. Jean Carroll sexual abuse case

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday rejected a push by President Donald Trump to throw out a jury's \$5 million finding that he sexually abused the writer E. Jean Carroll at a New York City department store in the mid-1990s and later defamed her.

The high court declined to take up the case in a brief, unexplained order, as is typical. There were no noted dissents. Trump also plans to appeal another \$83.3 million verdict awarded to Carroll by a different jury after a second defamation trial, his lawyers have said.

The decision comes as the court hands down its biggest opinions, including a ruling that expands his firing power over the federal bureaucracy with the exception of the Federal Reserve.

Trump called the decision to pass on the Carroll case "surprising" in a social media post, and he said he would continue to fight the defamation claims. "This Case is really against the United States of America, and all it stands for," he wrote.

Trump's lawyers had argued that allegations leading to the verdict were propped up by "highly inflammatory" evidentiary rulings, including those that allowed the testimony of two other women who accused Trump of sexual abuse decades ago. Trump has denied all three women's allegations.

Trump's attorneys argued the judge broke federal evidence rules in the case. They framed it as a distraction from Trump's unique duties as president, though the verdict came before his return to the White House.

"This mistreatment of a President cannot be allowed to stand," Attorney Justin D. Smith wrote in court documents. Trump, a Republican, has since nominated Smith to be an appeals court judge. His lawyers called the case "Liberal Lawfare" in a statement on Monday.

Carroll's lawyers had urged the justices to pass on the case. They argued that the women's testimony was relevant because the allegations were similar and that Judge Lewis Kaplan's decisions were in line with others around the country. "This question is not worthy of review," wrote attorney Roberta Kaplan, who is not related to the judge.

Monday's decision affirms the jury's verdict will stand, she said in a statement Monday. "His multiple efforts to appeal that verdict have all failed and today's ruling ends his quest to avoid accountability for his actions," she said.

Carroll, a longtime advice columnist and former TV talk show host, testified at a 2023 trial that Trump turned a friendly encounter in spring 1996 into a violent attack in the dressing room at Bergdorf Goodman, a luxury retailer across the street from Trump Tower in Manhattan. The jury also found Trump liable for defaming Carroll when he denied her allegation in 2022.

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

Trump has successfully fended off other hefty court judgments, including a New York civil fraud penalty of over \$500 million thrown out by a New York appeals court. The Supreme Court also granted him broad immunity from criminal prosecution in 2024, though it later narrowly rejected his bid to halt sentencing in his New York hush money case.

Americans' pride in US history and democracy drops, and fewer are proud to be American, polls find

By LINLEY SANDERS, SIMRAN PARWANI and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans have grown less proud of their country's history or the way its democracy works over the past decade, according to a new AP-NORC poll.

Americans' pride in the U.S. on several key attributes has dropped since 2017 — including the nation's military and its political influence around the globe — according to the survey from The Associated Press-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 79 of 84

NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. This poll was conducted in April, as the United States and Iran fought over the Strait of Hormuz in a prolonged war that started with the U.S. and Israel launching strikes on Iran.

New Gallup polling also finds that only 53% of U.S. adults are “extremely” or “very” proud to be an American, the lowest reading in the trend dating back to 2001.

The findings point to a broad decline in patriotic sentiment over a tumultuous period that included most of President Donald Trump’s first term, the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation that contributed to a backlash against President Joe Biden. That timeframe also covers Trump’s return to the White House, where he’s taken more aggressive actions on immigration and issues abroad.

Much of the falling positivity comes from Democrats, who have become increasingly disenchanted with the country since Trump’s first term.

At the same time, most U.S. adults say that being an American is “extremely” or “very” important to their identity, highlighting an enduring connection, even as some become increasingly critical of the country’s past or the government’s current actions.

American pride declines on the armed forces and democracy

Americans’ pride in the way democracy works in the U.S. has declined 14 percentage points, falling from 42% in February 2017 to 28% now.

In addition, Americans’ pride in their armed forces has dropped 19 percentage points since 2017, and pride in the U.S.’s history has declined 14 percentage points. In each case, the drop is largely driven by Democrats, with some movement among independents as well.

Karla Galdamez — a 48-year-old Democrat who used to teach U.S. history — believes America has regressed under the Trump administration. While the Californian is not proud of Trump, she is pleased with how far the U.S. has come in 250 years.

“It’s a country that really wanted to be different and really wanted to be better,” she said. “Despite some of the very ugly history that we have of segregation and slavery ... if you look at the trajectory of the last 250 years, we’ve done nothing but get better and move toward a more egalitarian nation.”

Only 14% of Democrats and 28% of independents say they are “extremely” proud to be an American, according to Gallup’s new poll, compared with 70% of Republicans.

The AP-NORC poll found that Republicans are especially likely to be proud of the nation’s armed forces. About 9 in 10 Republicans say the military makes them “extremely” or “very” proud, compared with about 6 in 10 U.S. adults.

Samantha Fulks, a 40-year-old in San Antonio, Texas, says she’s proud to be an American and doesn’t hide it. The Texas Republican showcases that pride with an American flag in her front yard — as well as Trump flags in the back yard — and she plans to wear red, white and blue on the Fourth of July. Fulks comes from a military family, and while she believes the country’s involvement in Iran is unnecessary, she remains a proud supporter of the military.

“I still support our troops no matter what they do,” Fulks said.

Being an American matters more for personal identity among Republicans and older adults

Matt Stafford, a 39-year-old in Massachusetts, is proud of being an American, even if the U.S. political system frustrates him.

He has a bald eagle tattooed on his back to represent the United States, its freedoms and “all the things we’re supposed to stand for as a country.” But despite that national pride, he often finds himself frustrated by politicians on both sides. Stafford — a centrist who identifies as “politically homeless” — wants Democrats and Republicans to come together to look out for their constituents in middle America.

“I love America, but our biggest problem is how we’re pushing both sides — like the left and the right — to the extremes,” he said.

For many Americans, their partisanship is often intertwined with their national identity. The poll finds that Republicans are much likelier than Democrats or independents to say being an American is “extremely” or “very” important to their personal identity.

Younger people are also much less likely than older people to say being an American is highly important

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 80 of 84

to their personal identity. About three-quarters of Americans ages 60 and older say being an American is highly important to them, compared with only about one-third of U.S. adults under 30.

Race or ethnicity matters more to many Black Americans

The AP-NORC survey found that the vast majority of Black Americans — 73% — say their race or ethnicity is “extremely” or “very” important to how they see themselves, higher than the share that say that about being an American.

Vincent Harris, a 60-year-old in California, says his identity as a Black man rises above other attributes for him because of how Black men are treated in America.

“A lot of people are scared of Black men just because we are Black and we are male. And that’s crazy,” Harris said. “People don’t even take you for who you are as a person; they just look at your race.”

About half of Hispanic Americans say their race or ethnicity is highly important to them, compared with 22% of white Americans.

Black and Hispanic adults are also more likely than white adults to say their family’s ancestry or country of origin is highly important to their personal identity.

Harris, who identifies as a gay man, says being an American is “a wonderful thing” because of the freedoms that Americans have, despite the obstacles he’s had to overcome.

“It’s great to be an American — regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or whatever. As long as you have that freedom of choice as an American, that’s a great thing,” Harris said. “Right now, I wouldn’t live in any other country in the world. I’m here. I love it.”

Europe’s record heat has overwhelmed Paris mortuaries and left families in distress

By JOHN LEICESTER and JEFFREY SCHAEFFER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Every few minutes, the mortuary owner’s phone rings. Since a record-smashing heat wave started taking lives and storage space for bodies in Paris and beyond, the funeral directors and mourning families calling him mostly have the same question: Do you have room for one more?

With all 32 places in his cold room taken, Zouhaier Hertelli reluctantly has to gently say “Non,” over and over and over again.

“We’re facing a really catastrophic situation,” he said. “I’m getting hundreds of calls.”

As the historic heat wave shifted its deadly temperatures eastward this weekend to other parts of Europe, France began counting the human cost it left in its wake.

Tallying heat-related deaths could take time

The statistical and public health work of tallying heat-related deaths could take weeks or months. But it’s already apparent that the toll exacted by the intense, unrelenting extreme temperatures was terrible in France, the first country hit from mid-June, particularly among older people who died at home.

“We’re dealing with an enormous spike of deaths because of the heat wave and we’re really full, full, full,” Hertelli said.

In its first preliminary estimate, the national public health agency said deaths surged during the heat wave’s peak in France last week, which roasted most of Europe’s largest country with temperatures that soared in many places above 40C (104 F) and also broke records for nighttime highs — an exhausting one-two punch for fatigued bodies.

Public Health France said there were more than 1,200 deaths last Wednesday, when France registered its hottest-ever day, breaking a record that had been set just the previous day. By way of comparison, the pre-heat wave death rate in April and May was around 900 to 1,000 per day, it said.

There were more than 1,400 deaths on Thursday and another 1,400 on Friday, it said.

The agency cautioned that its estimate of at least 1,000 additional deaths during those three sizzling days is expected to increase as more death certificates come in for people who died at home and in care facilities for older people, where most deaths are still not registered electronically.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 81 of 84

"Mortality will as a consequence be higher than these first figures," the agency said.

Many who died were 65 and older

It said that 85% of the deaths registered so far during the three days it studied involved people aged 65 and above and that there was a sharp increase in deaths at home — up by about 40% — particularly in the Paris region.

Hertelli and others in the funeral industry said Paris mortuaries quickly ran out of storage space. City Hall said two temporary storage units, with 20 places each, were installed for municipal mortuaries and that city hospitals provided another 50 additional places.

Still, Hertelli said funeral directors he spoke to told him they were having to store bodies as far away as Chartres — 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Paris — and in other regions around the capital. To open more space, he said he has asked authorities for permission to temporarily install refrigerated containers outside his mortuary, which is next to Paris' Orly airport, but is still waiting for a green light.

"Families are suffering," he said. "We have no solution to offer them, because the funeral homes are full. So we are deeply affected, we have empathy for them, but there's nothing we can offer. We are really facing a problem, a big problem," he said.

Temperatures reached historic highs

Historic high temperatures in 2003, surpassed this time, were blamed for 15,000 deaths, provoking a national reckoning about care of older people, who were particularly hard-hit. More than 5,700 deaths were also attributed to heat during an exceptionally hot summer last year.

Véronique Bertrand, a Paris funeral director, said she fears that lessons have been forgotten.

"Most of the deaths that we are dealing with at the moment were people who were living alone at home, isolated. Given the circumstances in which they were found, there can be no other conclusion than that these were deaths caused by the heat," Bertrand said.

"I think people absolutely need to wake up, that solidarity needs to come back, that what happened in 2003 led to a movement in that direction, with people thinking about their neighbors, of those around them who live alone and perhaps checking from time to time that they're drinking water and are being looked after," she said.

"With the passing years, we've perhaps forgotten that it could happen again and that things would even perhaps be worse."

Kara Swisher took Silicon Valley by force. Now she's eyeing influence in the 2028 campaign

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kara Swisher is everywhere.

She's filling in for Joy Behar on ABC's "The View." Appearing alongside Meryl Streep in "The Devil Wears Prada 2." Starring in a CNN documentary. Preparing a national tour. And churning out four podcasts most weeks featuring long-form interviews and commentary.

It's a ubiquity born of more than three decades chronicling the technology industry with a professed indifference to power that vaulted her into a rare echelon of journalism celebrity.

She harnessed that reputation to persuade rivals Steve Jobs and Bill Gates to appear onstage together and make Mark Zuckerberg so uncomfortable under questioning that he broke out into a sweat. She had Elon Musk's cellphone number — the two aren't currently speaking — and often texts tech and business leaders.

She's betting the influence that made her a Silicon Valley force will translate into politics as podcasts supplant traditional media as a destination for candidates seeking attention.

During President Donald Trump's second Republican term, potential Democratic presidential candidates ranging from California Gov. Gavin Newsom and former Vice President Kamala Harris to onetime Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and former White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel have appeared

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 82 of 84

on Swisher's shows. She expects that roster to grow.

"We get called by all the presidential candidates," the 63-year-old Swisher said in an interview at her home in a leafy corner of Washington, where her trademark high self-regard was on display. "We're going to get to all of them."

Swisher is hardly the only podcaster talking politics. Conservatives like Megyn Kelly and Tucker Carlson and some liberals like the former Barack Obama aides who host "Pod Save America" have larger audiences. They're all dwarfed by Joe Rogan.

But Swisher, who has evolved from a traditional print journalist to business owner and podcast host, has few rivals who can match her technology expertise and connect those observations to the broader political debate.

"When I first went on her podcast when I just got into Congress in 2017, she was very well respected in tech circles," said Rep. Ro Khanna, the California Democrat whose district includes Silicon Valley. "But now she's emerged as a larger cultural force, especially at a time where there's such anger at the tech billionaires and tech arrogance."

Interviews that produce revealing moments

When she's not on the road, Swisher typically records from a basement studio in the Washington home she shares with her wife and children and a cat named Lovely. The conversations on her interview podcast "On with Kara Swisher" are often referenced later on "Pivot," which she co-hosts with entrepreneur Scott Galloway.

They frequently produce revealing moments, as when Newsom filled in for Galloway on "Pivot." Swisher derided him for being too easy on Steve Bannon when the longtime Trump aide appeared on Newsom's own podcast.

"You had an opportunity to engage," Swisher pressed. "Why not engage?"

Swisher pushed Buttigieg on why he took so long to say President Joe Biden, a fellow Democrat, shouldn't have sought reelection. Buttigieg said he wasn't consulted.

"Sure, but you have eyes," Swisher responded.

In an interview, Newsom said Swisher calls him out.

"She'll send me missives unsolicited," he said. "She's usually right, and it drives me crazy."

Even Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, a rare Republican to go on her show, said it was a worthwhile experience despite being pressed on whether his willingness to speak out against the Trump White House emerged only after he opted against reelection.

"If you're a politician, you should be able to walk up anywhere and hold your own," Tillis said, adding, "You may end up having an opportunity, like in my experience, to give a completely different perspective."

'Pivot' was initially focused on tech and business

Shaping the political conversation wasn't the objective when "Pivot" launched in 2018. Galloway, who hosts his own "Prof G" and "Raging Moderates" podcasts, recalled the idea for "Pivot" was to focus on the intersection of technology and business.

"Show me a big business or tech story, and I'm going to show you a political overlay," Galloway said.

The expansion converges with a sense of urgency among Democrats to be more aggressive on digital platforms, where audiences are increasingly concentrated.

"The single most important quality that every candidate needs to have is the ability to talk and the ability to talk anywhere," said Teddy Goff, the co-founder of Precision Strategies and the digital director for Obama's 2012 presidential campaign.

Democrats are still stung by Rogan's nearly three-hour Trump interview in the final weeks of the 2024 campaign. Rogan who doesn't consider himself a journalist, has said Harris' campaign didn't agree to his terms. Harris has described being spurned by Rogan.

The podcasts add up to influence and financial success.

Galloway said "Pivot," which is effectively a joint venture between himself, Swisher and Vox Media, will be a \$15 million to \$20 million business this year, with a staff of just five.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 83 of 84

"Podcasts are the NBA," Galloway said. "There's a small amount of people making a lot of money."

A goal to be popular 'among the entire populace'

While Swisher largely hosts Democrats, she hopes to soon bring on additional Republicans and said she texted Steve Hilton's wife, a former Google executive, in hopes of booking him shortly after he advanced in California's governor's race.

"What we're going for is to be popular among the entire populace," she said. "So that people who don't feel they want to be in a constant state of anger, whether it's on the left or the right, can have a place to go."

But her barbed comments about Trump and other Republicans could complicate that goal. Swisher describes her work as "reported analysis."

"We don't shy away from our faults," Swisher said. "We don't shy away from our biases. You know, we don't shy away from things that most people try to."

Today in History: June 30, Night of the Long Knives

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, June 30, the 181st day of 2026. There are 184 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 30, 1934, Adolf Hitler launched his "blood purge" of political and military rivals in Germany in what came to be known as the "Night of the Long Knives."

Also on this date:

In 1918, labor activist and socialist Eugene V. Debs was arrested in Cleveland, charged under the Sedition Act of 1917 for a speech in which he denounced U.S. involvement in World War I. (Debs was sentenced to 10 years in prison and disenfranchised for life; President Warren G. Harding commuted Debs' sentence to time served in 1921.)

In 1921, President Warren G. Harding nominated former President William Howard Taft to be chief justice of the United States, succeeding the late Edward Douglass White.

In 1936, Margaret Mitchell's novel "Gone With the Wind" was released.

In 1958, the U.S. Senate passed the Alaska statehood bill.

In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that the government could not prevent The New York Times or The Washington Post from publishing the Pentagon Papers.

In 1971, a Soviet space mission ended in tragedy when three cosmonauts aboard Soyuz 11 were found dead of asphyxiation inside their capsule after it had returned to Earth.

In 1985, 39 American hostages from a hijacked TWA jetliner were freed in Beirut after being held for 17 days.

In 1994, the U.S. Figure Skating Association stripped Tonya Harding of the national championship and banned her for life for her role in the attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan.

In 2009, U.S. Army Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl went missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan, and was later confirmed to have been captured by insurgents after walking away from his post. (Bergdahl was released on May 31, 2014, in exchange for five Taliban detainees; he pleaded guilty to desertion and misbehavior before the enemy, but was spared a prison sentence by a military judge.)

In 2012, Islamist Mohammed Morsi was sworn in as Egypt's first freely elected president.

In 2016, then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that transgender people would be allowed to serve openly in the U.S. military, ending one of the last bans on service in the armed forces.

In 2019, Donald Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to set foot in North Korea, meeting Kim Jong-un at the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea.

In 2020, then-Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves signed a bill retiring the last U.S. state flag bearing the Confederate battle emblem. The same day, Boston's arts commission voted to remove a statue depicting a freed slave kneeling at Abraham Lincoln's feet.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 025 ~ 84 of 84

In 2022, Ketanji Brown Jackson was sworn in to the U.S. Supreme Court, shattering a glass ceiling as the first Black woman on the nation's highest court.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Nancy Dussault (doo-SOH') is 90. Olympic track champion Billy Mills is 88. Oceanographer Robert Ballard is 84. Singer-songwriter Glenn Shorrock (Little River Band) is 82. Jazz musician Stanley Clarke is 75. Actor David Garrison ("Married...with Children") is 74. Conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen is 68. Actor Vincent D'Onofrio is 67. Actor Deirdre Lovejoy ("The Wire") is 64. Actor Rupert Graves is 63. Boxer Mike Tyson is 60. Actor Monica Potter is 55. Actor Rick Gonzalez is 47. Actor Lizzy Caplan is 44. Country music singer-songwriter Cole Swindell is 43. Singer and actress Fantasia is 42. Olympic swimming champion Michael Phelps is 41. Baseball player Trea Turner is 33.