

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, July 3

Saturday, July 4

Firecracker Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

Sunday, July 5

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

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

United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m. at Britton,

11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Monday, July 6

Senior Meal: Chef salad with deli ham, tomatoes and cucumbers, fruited Jell-O.

Groton Legion at Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Groton 14U Legion at Webster, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

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

BBB Open Gym, 6 p.m., Arena

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

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Happy Birthday Eve, America

Tomorrow marks 250 years since the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. The delegates voted for the colonies to break from Great Britain on July 2, then spent two days revising the draft declaration. Many thought we would celebrate Independence Day on July 2 rather than July 4.

Since July 4, 1776, the US has grown from 13 colonies with 2.5 million people to 50 states, 14 territories, and one district with more than 342 million people. We're all connected by some 5,000 airports, 161,000 miles of federally supported highways, and 5.5 million miles of power lines. The economy has grown to nearly \$32T.

Fireworks have been part of the Fourth of July since the first celebrations, but this year's festivities will be bigger than ever to mark America's milestone 250th birthday. Roughly 850,000 fireworks are due to light up the nation's capital tomorrow, potentially breaking a world record.

While there will always be challenges, we've come a long way in 250 years. So grab a hot dog and raise a glass to the next 250 years—when our great-something-grandchildren will open "America's Time Capsule."

Church Rift Deepens

The Vatican declared yesterday the Society of St. Pius X has formally split from the Catholic Church after the traditionalist group appointed four new bishops without Pope Leo XIV's approval—despite the pope's direct appeal not to proceed.

The move excommunicates the bishops involved and the society's members. Marriages and confessions performed by its clergy are also no longer considered valid. Founded in 1970 by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, SSPX emerged in opposition to the Second Vatican Council reforms of the 1960s, which allowed Mass in local languages rather than Latin and encouraged greater engagement with other faiths. SSPX has 751 priests and claims about half a million followers.

The dispute echoes 1988, when Lefebvre was excommunicated for the same offense. The Vatican lifted those penalties in 2009 in a bid to reconcile. SSPX's latest decision complicates future reconciliation, presenting an early challenge for Pope Leo's papacy.

Security Guard Rescued

A Venezuelan security guard has been pulled from the rubble alive, eight days after earthquakes roiled the country, trapping him beneath more than 280,000 pounds of rubble.

Hernán Alberto Gil Flores was on duty in the parking lot of a shopping center when earthquakes struck on June 24 at 6 pm local time. Gil Flores was inside a small concrete booth, which protected him from collapsing debris and gave him a pocket of air. Rescuers discovered him four days later. They spent more than 100 hours working to extract him, delivering food, drinks, and supplies through a narrow shaft. Rescue efforts were interrupted by rain and the collapse of access ducts built to reach him.

At least 2,295 people were killed in the earthquakes and more than 11,000 were injured. Tens of thousands of people are still missing.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce are reportedly getting married in Madison Square Garden tonight.

Poll finds 70% of Americans care "not at all" about the wedding while more than 20% care at least "a little".

Ex-pop star Gary Glitter is charged with sexual offenses that allegedly occurred from 1978 to 1981; he is serving a 16-year sentence for 2015 convictions.

Prosecutors can access Tiger Woods' hospital records in Florida DUI case.

Mikel Oyarzabal scores twice as Spain beats Austria 3-0, advancing to the Round of 16.

Australia takes on Egypt at 2 pm ET, Argentina clashes with Cape Verde at 6 pm ET, and Colombia plays Ghana at 9:30 pm ET.

Science & Technology

First-of-its-kind NASA mission to prevent a space telescope from falling back to Earth is delayed for second time this week after a last-minute launch issue.

Honeybee queens exposed to pesticides off-load the toxins into their eggs to protect themselves.

Honeybees and other pollinators contribute over \$200B to the global economy.

Human red blood cells mature in nurseries structured differently than those found in mice; discovery upends longstanding assumptions and may shift understandings of disease progression and recovery.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.0%, Dow +1.1%, Nasdaq -0.8%).

US economy added 57,000 jobs in June, below the 115,000 jobs economists expected and the downwardly revised 129,000 jobs added in May.

Tesla deliveries rise 25% year over year to more than 480,000 vehicles sent, exceeding Wall Street expectations.

Amazon says it has launched enough satellites to offer internet service this year, challenging SpaceX's Starlink.

Jersey Mike's, the second largest US sandwich chain behind Subway, files for an initial public offering; private equity firm Blackstone bought an \$8B majority stake in the roughly 3,300-store chain in January 2025.

Politics & World Affairs

Russia launches largest attack on Ukrainian capital in more than four years of fighting, killing at least 27 people and wounding dozens more.

US-Iran negotiations pause for dayslong funeral ceremonies in Iran honoring Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, killed in US and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28; will culminate in July 9 burial.

Former Olympic canoe racer David Hearn indicted, accused of vandalizing Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.

Life is messy,
wear an apron ♥

“Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Psalm 34:8

❖ Ladies Luncheon ❖

Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

By Bethesda Women of the ELCA



Silent Auction opens at 10:30



Guest Speaker: Tiffany Hoeft, Bristol
Graduate and owner of “Minds Matter”



Luncheon at Noon

TICKETS
\$15.00

Deadline to purchase
tickets is Friday, July 10



Kay Espeland 605-492-3507



Jane Goehring 605-290-1420



Or contact any WELCA member



Huron battered by powerful storm, widespread damage and outages reported

HURON, S.D. — After severe storms swept across eastern South Dakota on Thursday, Huron was among the hardest-hit communities as powerful winds left widespread damage and knocked out electricity across nearly the entire city.

The airport in Huron recorded a wind gust of 105 mph as the storm moved through Thursday afternoon, underscoring the intensity of the system.

In the storm's aftermath, residents described a city brought to a standstill. Posting on the Mitchell 911 News Facebook page, Jordan Hanson said nearly all of Huron was without power.

"The entire city of Huron is dark," Hanson wrote.

According to the post, only a handful of traffic lights remained operational, along with a few buildings equipped with backup generators. Most intersections were without functioning signals, and street lights throughout the city were dark.

Hanson also reported that homes across Huron were without electricity, with only the occasional flicker of candlelight visible. Businesses were forced to close as the power outage affected virtually every sector of the community.

"There are no gas stations operating. No grocery stores are open. No restaurants. No stores at all are open," Hanson wrote.

The storm also left significant damage throughout the city.

"Damage everywhere," Hanson said. "I've never seen anything like this in my life."

Utility crews and emergency responders began assessing the damage and working to restore services as conditions allowed. Residents were urged to use caution while traveling due to non-functioning traffic signals, downed trees, power lines and other storm-related hazards.

Land for Sale

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

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



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Watertown, SD**

Beadle County Fatal Crash

What: Single-vehicle fatal crash

Where: 411th Avenue and 199th Street, 4.5 miles north of Yale, South Dakota

When: 12:56 a.m., Saturday, June 13, 2026

Driver 1: 22-year-old male from Huron, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 1999 Ford F-350

Seat Belt Used: No

Beadle County, S.D.- A Huron, South Dakota man died Wednesday from injuries sustained during a June 13 single-vehicle crash near Yale, South Dakota.

Names of the those involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 1999 Ford F-350 was traveling northbound on 411th Avenue near 199th Street when he entered a ditch, causing his vehicle to roll.

The driver was taken to a Huron medical center before being transported to a Sioux Falls Hospital. He died from his injuries on Wednesday, July 1, 2026.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Custer County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 40 at mile marker 52, 2 miles east of Hermosa, South Dakota

When: 5:54 p.m., Wednesday, July 1, 2026

Driver 1: 18-year-old male from Rapid City, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2019 Toyota Camry

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: 34-year-old female, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2021 Ford Explorer

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 1: 35-year-old female from Hermosa, South Dakota, minor injuries

Passenger 2: 7-year-old female, minor injuries

Passenger 3: 7-year-old male, minor injuries

Custer County, S.D.- A Rapid City, South Dakota man died in a two-vehicle crash Wednesday near Hermosa, South Dakota.

Names of the those involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2019 Toyota Camry was traveling westbound on South Dakota Highway 40 near Hermosa, when he entered the eastbound lane. At the same time, the driver of a 2021 Ford Explorer approached the Camry from the eastbound lanes and tried to avoid a collision. The vehicles struck each other.

The driver of the Camry sustained fatal injuries. The driver of the Explorer was taken to a Rapid City hospital via Life Flight. Her passengers sustained minor injuries. SD Highway 40 was closed for approximately one hour following the crash.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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 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* ★

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>

Preparations for Trump and Mount Rushmore fireworks include First Amendment area for protesters

**Leader of 2020 protest that ended with arrests says his group is 'boycotting' president's
visit this time**

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

The National Park Service is designating an area for protesters as the agency prepares to welcome thousands of attendees, including President Donald Trump, to a Friday fireworks display at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in western South Dakota.

The display is the first at the mountain carving in six years. In 2020, the Park Service approved a fireworks show after then-Gov. Kristi Noem asked Trump in his first term to reinstate the event — despite concerns about potential wildfires sparking from falling fireworks embers, pollution and litter from exploded fireworks, and the opposition of Lakota people from whom the surrounding Black Hills were taken through broken treaties.

A Native American-led protest along the road leading to Mount Rushmore during the 2020 event resulted in physical clashes with law enforcement, ending in arrests of protesters. Charges were later dropped.

This year, the Park Service has designated a 100-foot-long First Amendment area for protesters along Highway 16A at the edge of the town of Keystone, about 2 miles below the entrance to the memorial.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office will have an increased law enforcement presence throughout Keystone and other towns near Mount Rushmore. It's also increasing patrols throughout the Black Hills, according to Patrol Capt. Casey Kenrick.

"We always increase our staffing in those areas," Kenrick said. "Obviously, with the fireworks and it being the 250th anniversary of the country, we're expecting a bigger draw of people to the area."

Most of the agency's focus is on the influx of visitors to nearby towns and traffic control. The memorial will be closed to the public starting late Thursday night. Only the 4,800 ticketholders for the fireworks show — who obtained their tickets months ago in an online lottery — can get into the memorial Friday.

"We're expecting that to cause some traffic delays and traffic headaches, just because we all know about it, but people from outside of the area might not necessarily know that it's going on or be aware of where the roadblocks are," Kenrick said.

The department will also monitor protests.

Nick Tilsen, CEO of Rapid City-based Indigenous advocacy group NDN Collective, was a leader of the protests in 2020 and was one of the people arrested. He said his group is "boycotting" the Trump visit this time.

"We're not participating in any of that," Tilsen said.

Since 2020, Tilsen said, Native American activists in South Dakota and elsewhere have "chalked up wins" through community organizing. He pointed to a jury trial victory in a lawsuit against owners of the Grand Gateway Hotel in Rapid City who were accused of discriminating against Native American guests, a company's withdrawal from an exploratory graphite drilling project in a Black Hills meadow used for spiritual ceremonies, and a 20-year ban on mining activity in the Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek watershed area of the Black Hills.

"It's one of the reasons, strategically, that we're not doing a flashy action when Trump comes to the Black Hills," Tilsen said. "Quite frankly, we don't need to feed into his narrative."

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Separately, Tilsen has also helped launch the Day One Movement, described as “the beginning of a new future” on Sunday, the day after the nation’s 250th birthday. The movement includes advocacy for returning lands taken from Native Americans and providing reparations to African American people for slavery, among other goals.

Wildfire risk

Law enforcement authorities are also preparing to help with evacuations in the case of a wildfire.

Wildland firefighting personnel are at full staffing, working seven days a week to support fire suppression, according to Krista Landreneau with the Black Hills National Forest, which surrounds Mount Rushmore.

Landreneau also said there will be “robust aerial support” in the form of two helicopters and an airplane, to help with spotting wildfires and access points for ground crews, fire retardant deployment and coordinating aircraft in the airspace above a wildfire.

Wildfires can start when fireworks embers fall on dry vegetation. Parts of Pennington County — where Mount Rushmore is located — are in severe or extreme drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

South Dakota’s Department of Tourism entered into a \$700,000 contract in April with California-based Pyro Spectaculars to produce the fireworks show, and for “lighting elements that can be utilized if environmental conditions require an alternative to fireworks,” according to the department.

Few details about that alternative have been publicly released.

“If an alternative to fireworks is required, the lighting presentation is designed to illuminate Mount Rushmore National Memorial in a patriotic display, providing visitors with a meaningful visual experience accompanied by an Americana soundtrack,” Department of Tourism Public Relations Director Katlyn Svendsen said in an emailed statement.

A drone light show was considered, but the National Park Service dismissed it from further study as an alternative to the fireworks display, according to the service’s environmental assessment for this year’s event.

Livestreams available

The fireworks event is officially known as South Dakota’s Freedom 250 Mount Rushmore Fireworks Celebration, in honor of the nation’s 250th birthday. The fireworks show is expected to start at 9:30 p.m. Mountain time, preceded by keynote remarks from Trump. A Freedom 250 press release said Interior Department Secretary Doug Burgum — the former governor of North Dakota — and South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden will also speak. U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune and Sen. Mike Rounds, both of South Dakota, have said they will attend.

Livestreams of the event will be available on C-SPAN and on the Travel South Dakota website. Watch parties are planned in Rapid City at Main Street Square and the Hotel Alex Johnson, and at the Custer Beacon in Custer.

Trump also visited the new Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota, on Wednesday.

South Dakota Searchlight’s John Hult contributed to this report.

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.

Department of Revenue system charged wrong amounts in some vehicle tax transactions, audit finds

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — South Dakota's online 605Drive vehicle title and registration system charged incorrect tax amounts in some transactions, a new audit report found.

The state's Department of Revenue, which is responsible for the system, began using it in February 2025. The audit found some vehicle trade-in values were incorrect in the system, affecting taxable values during calculations.

Auditors tested 112 out of a total of 750,005 transactions from July 2024 through June 2025. That sample of transactions totaled \$139,171, including fees and a 4% tax on the purchase price of a vehicle. Three of the transactions resulted in tax overpayments totaling \$1,400.

Auditors recommended the department thoroughly review the system's titling and registration processes and identify and refund any additional overpayments.

Upon the department's internal review of the same pool of 750,005 transactions, the department found 604 that were impacted during a data transfer from the past system to the current system, the department said.

Out of those reviewed transactions, the department found nine additional errors that resulted in about \$1,450 in refunds, 24 errors in which taxpayers owed a collective \$4,200, and 56 other documentation errors that didn't have financial impacts.

Refunds have either been processed or are actively being processed, the department said, and it has or will seek payment for transactions that were undercharged.

Last year, a state audit of the department found it collected about \$530,000 in commercial vehicle fee overcharges, affecting more than 11,000 South Dakota vehicles.

In 2024, state Attorney General Marty Jackley said a deceased former three-decade employee of the department had allegedly created 13 fake vehicle titles to help her secure \$400,000 in loans. No charges were filed, because the former employee died before her alleged behavior came to light.

Two more former department employees were later convicted of similar accusations. One conviction was for grand theft by deception for creating a fake vehicle title that the employee used as proof of a trade-in to avoid taxes. The other employee was convicted of misprision of a felony, which means the person failed to report knowledge of the other's crime.

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.

States gird for new Medicaid 'medically frail' rule

Even enrollees with serious illnesses and disabilities will have to prove they can't work

BY SHALINA CHATLANI

State Medicaid agencies are concerned that many sick and disabled enrollees will lose their coverage because the Trump administration is narrowing the definition of who is "medically frail" enough to get an exemption from new work requirements.

Under the tax and spending law President Donald Trump signed a year ago, states that have expanded Medicaid to cover more adults under the Affordable Care Act — 40 states plus the District of Columbia — must mandate that those adults work, go to school or volunteer for at least 80 hours a month.

The so-called One Big Beautiful Bill Act exempts Medicaid recipients who are "medically frail," with serious illnesses or disabilities. However, on June 1 the Trump administration published interim guidelines for implementing the law that specify that in order to qualify for the "medically frail" designation, a person must have a significant health condition and be significantly impaired in their ability to work.

"This rule helps Americans build skills and independence through work, education, job training, or com-

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munity service, creating new opportunities for themselves and their families,” said Dr. Mehmet Oz, director for the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, in a statement earlier this month announcing the new guidance.

But states had been operating under the assumption that they would use the federal government’s traditional “medically frail” designation, which includes five distinct categories of disabilities and illnesses but does not require Medicaid agencies to determine whether the person can work.

States already were scrambling to set up systems to enforce the new work rules by the January 2027 deadline, according to Jocelyn Guyer, senior managing director at Manatt Health, a consulting firm that advises state Medicaid agencies.

“Now, it’s not enough just to have that diagnosis. You may need to go to your doctor and get a special note,” Guyer said. “So, it’s turned it from a very straightforward protection of people with disabilities and significant health conditions into a paperwork morass, where all of a sudden they have to get their health-care providers involved in documenting and assessing their capacity to work.”

Earlier this week, 25 Democratic-led states plus the District of Columbia sued the Trump administration over the work requirement, largely on the basis of the changed “medically frail” guidelines.

Several state Medicaid agencies said they’re struggling to understand what they’ll have to do to comply. Even before the “medically frail” change, states were hiring consultants and creating IT systems to verify and track enrollees’ working status, which they never had to do before.

“Most states were working on identifying a number of diagnoses that may be able to meet that definition in hopes that that would align with what the final guidance said,” Melanie Bush, deputy secretary for the North Carolina Medicaid Division of Health Benefits, said. “But the layering in of impaired ability to work — there’s not necessarily a data source that aligns with that.”

Bush said states are focused on figuring out how to prevent eligible people from dropping off the rolls just because of paperwork and logistical challenges. One analysis estimates that five million people could lose coverage from the original work requirements alone. State leaders and consultants worry that figure could rise significantly with the new guidance.

Healthcare providers are worried, too.

“This is not what we’re trained to do. Most of us do not do disability determinations and employability assessments regularly, and even if we do feel comfortable with that role, we don’t have time, we’re not like we’re not paid to do that,” said Dr. Benjamin Sommers, a health economist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

“Primary care providers, in particular, are already overworked and burning out.”

Still, Medicaid directors have experience in dealing with major shifts within the program, according to Michael Heifetz, a managing director at consulting firm Alvarez & Marsal and a former Medicaid director in Wisconsin. Heifetz said states regularly face major rule changes and tight timeline challenges, and with greater access to advanced technology to help automate some tasks, he’s confident they will be able to mitigate enrollment losses.

Another big help, he said, is that Medicaid enrollees will be allowed to “self-attest” to their eligibility for an exemption through 2027.

“States will work through it, and they will again work with the advocacy community to minimize the impact on beneficiaries,” Heifetz said. “There is still some ambiguity in the rule about how self-attestation will work in 2027, because the rule reads that other sources of information and documentation must still be sought, but in the end, self-attestation will prevail.”

Jennifer Tolbert, an expert on state health policy at health research group KFF, said there are several data sources states might tap to determine a person’s ability to work, such as insurance claims, prescriptions and a person’s use of durable medical equipment.

She cautioned, however, that it will be a challenge to use such data to make thoughtful determinations, especially for people with substance use disorders and mental health issues.

To keep eligible people enrolled, California will use text message alerts, mailed notices, and electronic

reminders to make sure recipients meet verification deadlines, according to Anthony Cava, a spokesperson for California Department of Health Care Services. Nevertheless, Cava said, the state is concerned that people, including those with serious illnesses and disabilities, will drop off the rolls "solely due to paper-work barriers."

Adela Flores-Brennan, Colorado's Medicaid director, said states could come under fire for making errors. "We're also worried about audits," Flores-Brennan said. "There are new penalties for states, bigger penalties for states related to error rates, and the level of complexity that is being introduced into eligibility right now is making an environment that is ripe for errors because it's confusing and it's complex."

Stateline reporter Shalina Chatlani can be reached at schatlani@stateline.org

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

Shalina Chatlani covers health care and environmental justice for Stateline.

Medicaid again to cover non-abortion care at Planned Parenthood as GOP ban ends

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — Republicans celebrated last year when they barred Medicaid payments from going to Planned Parenthood for one year, predicting the financial impact would hollow out the organization.

A year later, with that section of the "big, beautiful" law set to expire July 4, GOP lawmakers are trying to find a way to keep the nationwide prohibition in place, though they won't be able to accomplish that before the deadline.

That means states will now determine whether people enrolled in the program for lower-income individuals can, once again, get routine healthcare services from the Planned Parenthood clinics that remain open.

Nora Walsh-DeVries, vice president of political and legislative affairs at Planned Parenthood Action Fund, said the law forced the organization to close nearly 30 of its healthcare centers.

"The impact is really horrible for us and some of it is unfortunately irreversible," she said. "And it's tough to try to deal with what's happened in this past year, kind of also knowing that there is an intention from Republicans to permanently defund us."

Some Planned Parenthood clinics, she said, tried to find ways to keep treating Medicaid enrollees, but ultimately that was "unsustainable" and not something every affiliate could manage.

The result meant "tens of thousands of patients have been denied access to basic care services like cancer screenings, which I think we can all agree is something we should want people to get when they need it, where they need it, how they need it," Walsh-DeVries said.

The impact was ultimately less widespread than Planned Parenthood originally predicted, when its president said in a statement just days before the law took effect that "nearly 200 Planned Parenthood health centers in 24 states across the country are at risk of closure."

The expiration won't have an impact on abortion access for Medicaid enrollees, since a decades-old rider on government spending bills, which blocks taxpayer dollars from going to abortion with limited exceptions, remains in place.

Republicans view the closures as a victory and are trying to renew the provision in an attempt to shutter more Planned Parenthood clinics. They believe any healthcare organization that provides abortions, even if those largely aren't covered by taxpayer dollars, shouldn't be included in any federal health programs.

Pressure from conservatives

The House Freedom Caucus, a collection of far-right Republicans, wrote to Speaker Mike Johnson in late June, pressing him to include a similar prohibition in another party-line bill.

"The American people rightfully expect a Republican-led Congress to deliver real results, not excuses or half-measures," they wrote. "After years of broken promises, voters have entrusted us with majorities in both the House and Senate. This is our last and best chance to prove they were right to send us here

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to fight for them.”

They added that another reconciliation bill must prohibit “federal funding for abortion providers to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not being used to subsidize the radical abortion industry.”

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America President Marjorie Dannenfelser and other anti-abortion organizations are lobbying Republicans to again block Medicaid funding from going to Planned Parenthood.

“Defunding Big Abortion is now the default expectation of the pro-life movement,” Dannenfelser wrote in a statement. “When they return to D.C., Republicans must do all they can through reconciliation to once again block taxpayer dollars from Planned Parenthood and abortion businesses.”

Republicans used the complex budget reconciliation process to enact their “big, beautiful” law and the \$70 billion package to fund immigration enforcement. The special process allowed GOP leaders to get around procedural votes in the Senate that would otherwise require bipartisanship as long as each provision has an impact on federal revenues or spending that is not deemed “merely incidental” by that chamber’s parliamentarian.

Strained system

Subasri Narasimhan, research director at the Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy at UCLA Law School, said there often aren’t other health centers to cover the gaps left when a Planned Parenthood closes or is no longer reimbursed for treating a Medicaid enrollee.

“We have a pretty strained healthcare system in so many different respects, but we’re looking at an extremely strained system when it comes to reproductive healthcare,” Narasimhan said.

Some state governments, she said, tried to cover the budget holes created during the last year, though ultimately weren’t able to fully replace the loss of federal funding.

Republicans reinstituting the same prohibition on Medicaid payments for non-abortion healthcare services, she said, would likely lead more people on the program to delay or skip preventative care altogether.

“We’re looking at folks who are quite vulnerable and often use Planned Parenthood as their primary source of care,” she said. “And so there’s no option to look for another health center.”

Kathleen Adams, professor in the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, said that if a program can vary state to state, it will, and this was no exception.

“What I’m seeing is the states are finding emergency funds, other ways to channel funds to Planned Parenthood to sort of keep that part of their system active,” she said.

There are also other programs and clinics, like federally qualified health centers and safety-net providers, that Adams said could play a part in filling some of the gaps.

“I don’t lose heart so much as we might otherwise about these provisions to Planned Parenthood because states are aware of these issues,” she said. “And if they don’t provide access to contraceptives, they’re more likely to get unintended pregnancies, or pregnancies amongst uninsured women.”

State action

Laurie Sobel, associate director for Women’s Health Policy at KFF, wrote in a post that after the nationwide moratorium expires, a Supreme Court ruling from late June 2025 will allow state governments to block certain healthcare providers, like Planned Parenthood, from participating in their Medicaid programs.

“This ruling marked a significant departure from longstanding interpretations of the Medicaid ‘free choice of provider’ provision, which guarantees enrollees the right to obtain care from any qualified and willing Medicaid provider,” Sobel wrote.

Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas have either blocked or tried to block Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood, according to Sobel’s analysis.

Other states, she wrote, “may follow suit” once the nationwide Medicaid prohibition expires July 4.

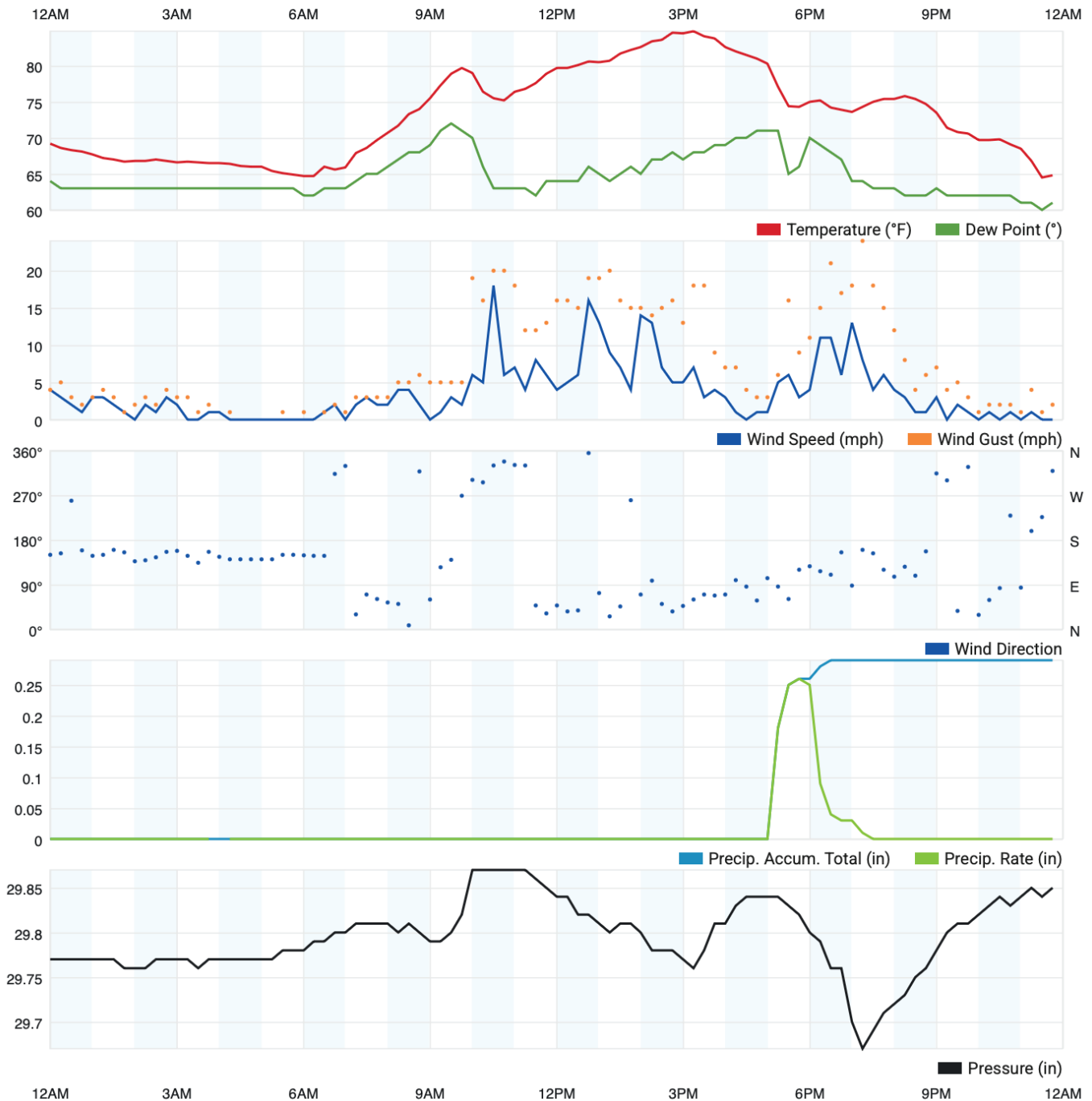
Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 2, 2026



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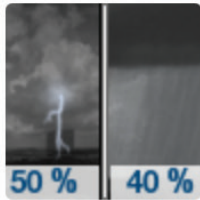
Today



High: 87 °F

Partly Sunny
then Severe
Thunderstorms

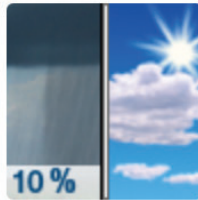
Tonight



Low: 64 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Chance
Showers

Independence
Day



High: 84 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Mostly Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 90 °F

Hot



Slight Risk For Severe Weather

July 3, 2026
3:16 AM CDT

Thunderstorm Timing

Maximum Probability of Thunder (%)
Forecast

Key Messages:

- One round of storms this morning, with the potential for a second round of storms by late this afternoon into this evening.
 - Initial storm threat:
 - Hail 1-2"
 - Winds 60-75 mph
- Uncertainty:**
 - Smoke aloft from western wildfires could influence instability.
 - Poor consistency among high resolution models regarding storm placement & timing.

NEW

Important Updates:

- Large hail and strong thunderstorm wind gusts across portions of central into south central South Dakota this afternoon and evening are the main concerns.

	7/3 Fri						7/4 Sat		
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am
Aberdeen	8	9	19	24	27	27	10	10	10
Britton	8	7	20	27	26	28	9	18	18
Chamberlain	16	13	16	40	41	41	20	15	10
Clark	12	9	21	19	27	22	12	13	13
Eagle Butte	17	15	21	26	30	30	12	4	7
Eureka	11	13	30	30	33	33	12	9	9
Gettysburg	16	17	23	20	37	37	11	9	6
McIntosh	22	16	26	38	31	21	12	9	5
Milbank	7	7	14	22	27	21	18	21	21
Miller	12	10	17	23	36	36	15	12	7
Mobridge	8	15	28	28	33	33	12	11	8
Murdo	19	19	12	30	37	37	18	4	2
Pierre	17	17	14	32	40	40	16	9	6
Redfield	10	8	20	20	28	28	13	9	8
Sisseton	6	5	14	22	26	27	12	26	26
Watertown	11	9	18	22	26	23	15	15	14
Webster	7	6	18	20	25	21	10	16	16
Wheaton	6	6	8	18	29	27	15	36	27

Maximum Probability of Thunder Forecast (%)



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

Monitoring ongoing storms this morning over portions of central and south central South Dakota. An additional round of thunderstorms, possibly severe, is expected by late this afternoon, continuing into this evening. Severe weather this afternoon could initially start with a large hail and high wind threat.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 2:55 PM

Low Temp: 64 °F at 6:06 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 7:13 PM

Precip: 0.29

Today's Info

Record High: 107 in 1949

Record Low: 39 in 1917

Average High: 84

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in July.: 0.35

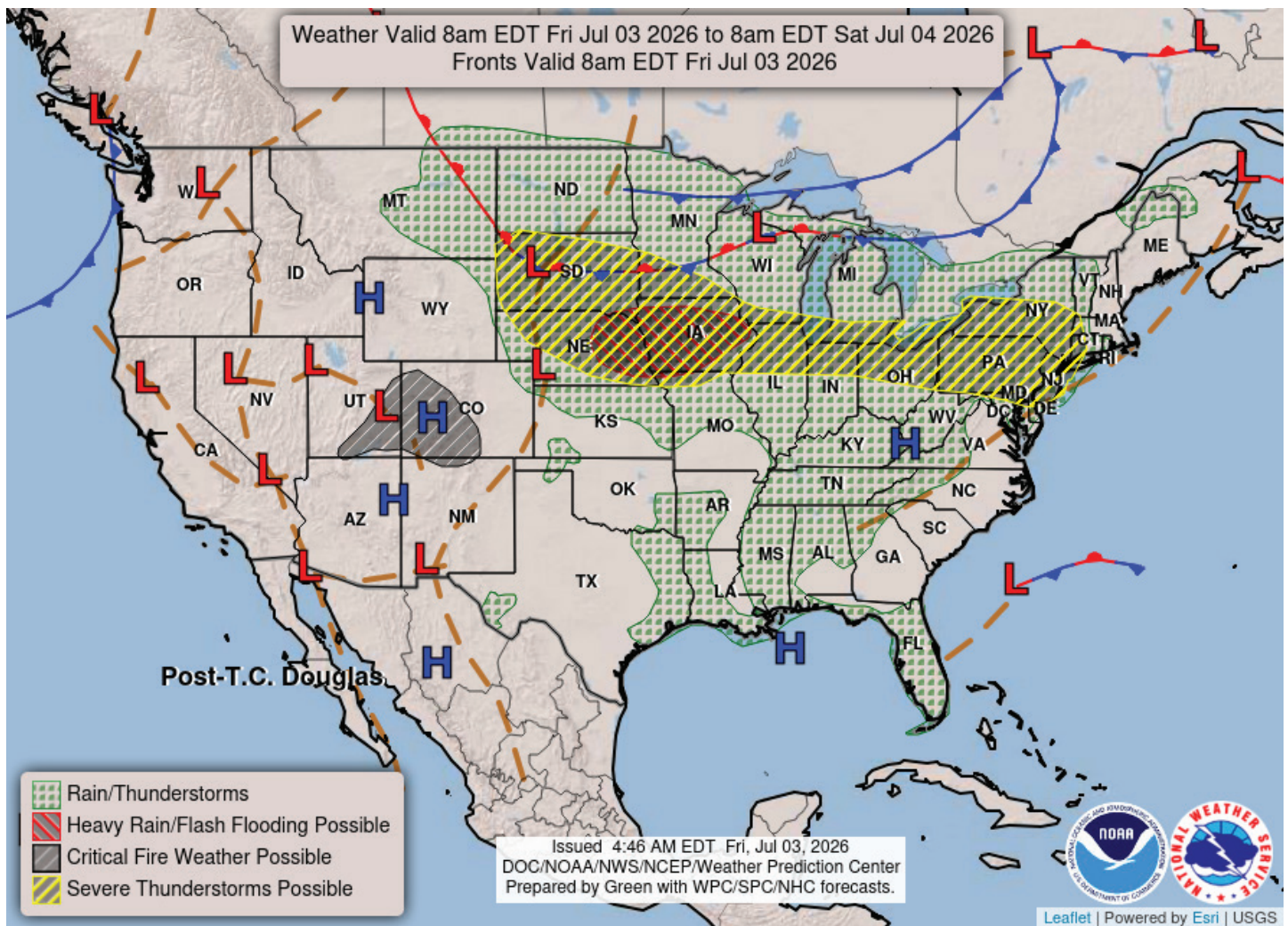
Precip to date in July.: 0.29

Average Precip to date: 11.36

Precip Year to Date: 9.76

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 am



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Today in Weather History

July 3, 1959: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast after destroying a farm building at the western edge of Java, Walworth County. Elsewhere in the area, high straight line winds caused property damage while hail damaged crops. The largest hailstone was 2.75 inches in diameter and was observed 9 miles NNW of Timber Lake.

July 3, 2003: A supercell thunderstorm moved southeastward across western Jackson County and Bennett County. The storm dropped up to golf ball sized hail and produced an F2 tornado north of Tuthill in Bennett County. The tornado touched down about a mile north of the junction of highways 18 and 73, where it destroyed a garage. The tornado moved south-southeast and destroyed a mobile home just to the southeast of the highway intersection and then dissipated just north of Tuthill. No one was injured.

Also on this day, a line of severe thunderstorms with hail up to the size of golf balls and winds over 80 mph at times brought widespread property and crop damage to far northeast Brown, across Marshall and Roberts counties. The wind and hail caused the most damage to crops in a 20 mile to a 70-mile long area from north of Britton over to Sisseton and into west central Minnesota. Much of the plants were shredded to the ground. In fact, approximately 30 percent (70,000 acres) of Marshall County's 227,000 acres of crops were damaged or destroyed. Cities receiving the most damage from the line of storms were, Hecla, Andover, Britton, Kidder, Veblen, Roslyn, Langford, Lake City, Claire City, Sisseton, Waubay, Rosholt, and Wilmot. Storm damage mostly included trees and branches down, power lines and poles down, roof and siding damage from hail and fallen trees, some farm outbuildings damaged or destroyed, and many windows broke out of homes and vehicles. Also, many boats, docks, and campers received some damage in the path of the storms. An aerial crop spraying plane at the Sisseton airport was picked up and thrown 450 feet and landed upside down. In Claire City, a 55,000-bushel grain bin was blown off of its foundation and flattened. On a farm five miles north of Amherst, three large grain bins were blown over and damaged.

July 3, 2010: Severe thunderstorms brought damaging winds to parts of central South Dakota, especially to Lyman County. Eighty mph winds moved a building off the foundation at the Presho Municipal Airport. Eighty mph winds also destroyed or damaged many grain bins and caused damage to several other buildings in and around Presho. A large sign, twenty power poles, along with many trees were downed in Presho. There were also several broken houses and car windows from hail and high winds. Seventy mph winds tore a garage door loose, bent a flagpole over, and downed many large tree branches in Kennebec. The winds also caused some damage to homes, sheds, and grain bins in Kennebec.

1873: A tornado in Hancock County, in far west central Illinois, destroyed several farms. From a distance, witnesses initially thought the tornado was smoke from a fire. A child was killed after being carried 500 yards; 10 other people were injured. [Click HERE](#) for more information from Illinois Genealogy Trails.

1975: Up to 3 inches of rain caused flash flooding throughout Las Vegas, NV. The main damage occurred to vehicles at Caesars Palace with approximately 700 damaged or destroyed with several cars found miles away. North Las Vegas was hardest hit with \$3.5 million in damage. Two people drowned in the flood waters.

2000: There is a certain irony about one of the driest places getting the greatest rainfall, and yet that is what happened at usually rain-sparse Vanguard, Saskatchewan on July 3 when a carwash-like down-pour flooded the community of 200 people, some 65 km southeast of Swift Current. As much as 375 mm (14.76") of rain fell in eight hours, the greatest storm for that duration on the Canadian Prairies and one of the most substantial rainfall intensities ever recorded in Canada.

The spectacular thunderstorm produced more cloud-to-ground lightning strikes than that part of southern Saskatchewan would expect in two years. A year's amount of rain left crops in the field drowning and rotting, and roads and rail lines under water. The force of the water crushed cars and farm implements swept away grain bins and soaked large bales. Stranded residents had to be rescued by boat, which rapidly became the carrier of choice on the main street in Vanguard. The flash flood also carried away herds of cattle and drowned dozens of deer and antelope. Some further irony, when millions of liters of contaminated water submerged the water-treatment plant and backed up into homes and businesses, officials had to ship in bottled water from Swift Current.



Confidence in Times of Distress

A calmness in the chaos awaits us all. We need only to be still

Psalms 46:1-11: 1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;

3 Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth.

9 He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire.

10 ``Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

11 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

"I'm out of here!" Most of us feel this way at some point. When circumstances feel overwhelming or the daily grind seems unbearable, we long to escape. The pressure builds, and we want relief.

But the Father has a better way: Instead of fighting against stressful situations, we can learn to be at rest in Him. To the psalmist, this meant being still and knowing that God is truly God (Ps. 46:10). Jesus promises the same peace in the midst of trials when we let go of our troubles and entrust them to His care (John 14:27). As we draw near to Him and absorb the truth of Scripture, we begin to experience a calmness of spirit we couldn't create on our own.

Most of all, God wants us to know who He is. As we trust in His absolute sovereignty, accept the goodness of His plans, and receive His deep, abiding love for us, trust grows naturally. Then we find it easier to be still—to stop striving and truly rest in the knowledge that He is God.

The better we understand our heavenly Father, the more we're able to walk through difficult circumstances with calmness and confidence (Philippians 4:7). This is the peace that doesn't depend on our circumstances changing, but on knowing the One who's in control of all things.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.02.26

13 21 25 37 47 1

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 17 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.30.26

26 41 50 53 62 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$542,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 2 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

10 20 35 38 46 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$31,490,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 17 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

4 14 22 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$164,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 32 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

10 20 30 60 64 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 1 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

2 6 26 39 68 6

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$396,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 1 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Extreme heat bears down as America 250 celebrations ramp up. Trump heads to Mount Rushmore

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Festivities commemorating the 250th anniversary of American independence from Great Britain kick into higher gear across the United States on Friday as celebrations are balanced with efforts to stay safe as much of the country bakes under extreme heat.

President Donald Trump will travel to South Dakota to deliver a speech and watch fireworks at Mount Rushmore. And in a novel twist, there will be a ball drop in New York City's Times Square at midnight to usher in the July Fourth holiday with much the same revelry that is typically reserved for New Year's Eve.

The activity culminates in the main event Saturday, when fireworks will erupt in communities across the U.S., along with backyard cookouts and block parties. Trump will deliver another speech at the National Mall in Washington before what is being billed as a historically massive fireworks show.

But for all the celebrations, there are also serious safety considerations as potentially record heat grips much of the Midwest and East Coast. Officials have warned those celebrating the holiday to stay hydrated and take air-conditioned breaks as needed.

The heat has already affected some of the programming surrounding the holiday. In Washington, organizers of the Capitol Fourth concert banned the public from attending a Thursday rehearsal because of the heat. The concert Friday, a staple of Washington's Independence Day traditions, may ultimately be canceled. Organizers of celebrations in Washington on Saturday said they were adding water stations along with cooling resources and medical support.

From Boston to Norristown, Pennsylvania and Gettysburg National Military Park, plans were shifting to accommodate the soaring temperatures. Amtrak canceled some trains in the Northeast due to excessive heat that could affect the tracks.

The holiday is unfolding at a unique time in the U.S. The anniversary has served as an opportunity for the country to reflect on its history while also reminding it of the political polarization of the moment.

Even the celebrations themselves have not quite escaped the divide.

Freedom 250, an organization aligned with the White House, has come to rival America250, a bipartisan group founded by Congress a decade ago. Freedom 250 has organized much of the activity in Washington, including the Great American State Fair, which has gained attention for the relatively small crowds it has attracted. America250 is behind the ball drops unfolding in many cities, including New York, and will host a concert in Los Angeles on Saturday.

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults feel "proud" about the country's 250th anniversary, according to an April survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Roughly 3 in 10 said "excited" describes their emotions.

Ahead of the holiday, auto technician Joe Fuqua-Bejarano, in Topeka, Kansas, sized up "what makes us awesome" as a people. It is clearly not the politics, in his view, but rather resilience.

"We've just all got to find unity somewhere, whether that's in laughter or perseverance, and keep everybody cool," he said from the fireworks stand where he is doing a booming business as a side hustle.

Christina Zhou, a 25-year-old research assistant from Cambridge, Massachusetts, said she would aim to "think about just things that are happening locally."

"It feels a little bit more like within our own personal control," she said.

Putin shrugs off fuel shortages in Russia as he ramps up attacks on Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

Despite severe fuel shortages across Russia, President Vladimir Putin appears unbothered by Ukraine's increasing attacks on his country's oil refineries.

He has shrugged off the setback for one of the world's leading oil-producing nations as "not critical," dismissed ceasefire proposals and insisted the war will continue until his goals are met.

Putin has described the attacks on Russian energy as an effort by Ukraine to distract attention from its losses on the battlefield, although analysts say the advance of Russian forces has been stymied in recent months. The Russian leader appears to believe his government can keep the fuel crisis from eroding his authority and support for the war he launched more than four years ago.

The Russian military unleashed a massive 11-hour barrage on the Ukrainian capital overnight into Thursday morning that killed at least 30 people. It was one of the deadliest attacks on Kyiv since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Here's a deeper look at the latest exchange of strikes and Putin's refusal to halt the fighting:

Gas shortages worsen in Russia as more oil facilities are hit

There have been more than 50 reported Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries and other energy facilities in Russia and occupied Crimea since March — a barrage Ukrainian leaders have said is intended to pressure Moscow to end the war.

At the very least, the attacks have brought the war home even more poignantly for millions of Russians, shattering Putin's narrative of the conflict as something that doesn't affect the lives of ordinary people in his country.

An estimated one-third of Russia's refining capacity has been cut off, according to Chris Weafer, CEO of the consultancy Macro-Advisory. The attacks have inflicted lasting damage that will be costly to fix.

Despite significant air defenses protecting Russia's capital, a top refinery in Moscow has been hit twice. The second strike on June 18 set it ablaze, damaging key equipment that will reportedly take until the end of the year to repair.

With gasoline production in Russia reduced by roughly 17% to 850,000 barrels a day, according to government statistics, rationing has been introduced in many regions, and motorists have had to wait in line for hours to refuel.

In an effort to ease fuel deficit, the government has allowed production of lower quality gasoline with higher sulfur content through the year's end.

Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has faced the worst fuel shortages. Gasoline sales to individuals have been periodically halted there altogether.

Putin downplays the impact of Ukrainian strikes

Putin chaired a meeting of government officials last weekend to discuss the fuel shortages.

In televised statements, he acknowledged the country was going through a "difficult period." He pledged to accelerate repairs of energy facilities and said Russia would consider importing gasoline to help make up for what he described as "temporary" shortages. He also said Russia's arms industry will boost production of air defense systems to fend off future Ukrainian attacks.

Putin portrayed the Ukrainian strikes as an attempt to divide Russian society, halt Moscow's offensive and try to force the Kremlin into negotiations on "terms advantageous to our adversary."

"We will not give them that chance," he said.

While Putin said Ukraine's long-range strikes on Russian oil facilities "have absolutely no effect on the situation at the front," Western military analysts say mid-range strikes on the Russian army in recent months have hampered military logistics and slowed the tempo of its advance, leaving the battlefield in a stalemate.

Putin claims Russian forces are still advancing across the roughly 1,000 kilometer-long (620 mile-long) front line. In an interview last weekend with state TV, Putin mentioned the names of small villages and

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even streets in Ukraine.

Putin dismisses Ukraine's ceasefire offers

The Russian president has responded to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's offer to meet by challenging him to come to Moscow, a non-starter to Ukraine.

Putin has rejected a truce that Kyiv and its Western allies have proposed. He says it would only give Ukrainian forces time to rest and regroup.

He has made any ceasefire conditional on Ukraine's withdrawal from the part of the Donetsk region it still controls, a demand rejected by Ukraine. Putin has said that a final peace deal must oblige Ukraine to abandon its bid to join NATO, reduce its military and protect Russian language and culture.

In last Sunday's interview, Putin claimed that Ukraine had offered to limit the fighting to the four regions that Russia annexed but never fully captured: Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. He said he rejected the proposal because it would free up Ukrainian forces from other areas where Russian troops have made inroads and let them focus on fending off the Russian attacks in the four southeastern regions.

"Faced with a catastrophic shortage of personnel, the armed forces of Ukraine apparently believe this could be their salvation," Putin said. "Saving the Kyiv regime is not part of our plans."

The Kremlin said the offer was made via confidential channels; Ukrainian officials have not publicly discussed any such proposal.

Putin also dismissed a Ukrainian proposal to mutually halt strikes deep into each other's territory. Russian attacks deep into Ukraine are "much more powerful, sensitive and, frankly speaking, destructive," he said.

In Thursday's deadly barrage on Kyiv, Russia once again hit residential areas even as it claimed to be targeting military sites. By contrast, the vast majority of Ukrainian strikes in Russia have hit oil facilities, weapons factories and other military targets.

A United Nations tally says more than 16,000 Ukrainian civilians have died in the war.

World shares are mixed after Dow hits a new record, as some AI shares bounce back

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — World shares were mixed Friday after the Dow Jones Industrial Average set another record, as some key AI related stocks rose while others extended losses.

The future for the S&P 500 gained 0.3% while that for the Dow slipped 0.2%. U.S. markets will be closed Friday for the Independence Day holiday.

In European trading, Germany's DAX rose 0.4% to 25,667.73 and the CAC 40 in Paris edged 0.1% lower, to 8,471.19. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 0.4% to 10,613.55.

In Asia, South Korea's Kospi, which sank nearly 8% on Thursday, gained 5.8% to 8,088.34. Samsung Electronics, the country's biggest company and a major maker of computer chips, gained 8.2%, while its smaller rival SK Hynix jumped 10.9%.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 advanced 1.5% to 69,744.07. Chipmaker Tokyo Electron rose 0.4%, while memory maker Kioxia jumped 9.2%.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng climbed 1.3% to 23,350.03 and the Shanghai Composite index added 0.4% to 4,043.64.

Taiwan's Taiex edged 0.1% higher, while the Sensex in India rose 0.4%.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 picked up 1.4% to 8,844.40.

"Asian stocks found some footing after two bruising tech-led sessions, with the Korean market once again showing how quickly a stretched rubber band can snap back when everyone leans the same way," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

On Thursday, most U.S. stocks rose as the Dow snagged another record, gaining 1.1% to 52,900.07.

Drops for computer chip companies and other winners of the artificial-intelligence boom kept indexes mixed.

The S&P 500 finished the day virtually unchanged and edged up by less than 0.1%, even though seven

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out of every 10 stocks within the index rose. It closed at 7,483.24.

The Nasdaq composite dropped 0.8% to 25,382.67.

Stocks broadly got some help from a report showing U.S. employers added 57,000 jobs to their payrolls last month. That's good for the economy, but it was also short of the 100,000 jobs that economists expected and a slowdown from May's hiring pace.

The weaker-than-expected result could relieve pressure on inflation, which has been accelerating worldwide because of jumps in oil prices caused by the war with Iran. Now that oil prices are back below where they were before the war, if inflation slows in upcoming months, the Federal Reserve may feel less need to raise interest rates several times this year.

That would be a boon for investors, who tend to love lower interest rates because they make it less expensive for U.S. households and businesses to borrow money and spend. Lower rates also tend to push upward on prices for stocks and other investments.

Stocks of companies in the crypto industry were also strong after the price of bitcoin rose roughly 2%, a day after dropping near its lowest level since 2024. Robinhood Markets rose 3.8%, and Coinbase Global gained 3.9%. Bitcoin rose 0.9% early Friday.

Selling of computer chip companies' shares has weighed on indexes. They've come under pressure because of worries that their stock prices shot too high in the frenzy around AI and that all the spending on chips and data centers may not yield as much profit and productivity growth as hoped.

Memory maker Micron Technology erased an early gain to drop 5.5%, a day after plunging 10.6%. Nvidia fell 1.4%, and Lam Research sank 10.2%. They were some of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500 because they've grown so huge in size amid AI mania.

Nvidia has a total value of nearly \$4.7 trillion, so its stock's movements have more weight on the S&P 500 than any other.

In other trading early Friday, Brent crude, the international standard, shed less than 0.1% to \$71.76 a barrel. U.S. benchmark crude gave up 0.2% to \$68.48 a barrel.

The dollar rose to 161.14 Japanese yen from 161.11 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1451 from \$1.1431.

Venezuelans are rushing to identify the bodies of their loved ones as earthquake deaths multiply

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela (AP) — Speaking in a hushed voice, Rosa López recalled how she had to sidestep the rows of bodies lying under a harsh sun as she helped her daughter search for her missing husband. Even her years working as a nurse did not prepare her for the sight of the dozens of dead wrapped in sheets or blankets.

"We saw a lot of bodies that had not yet been identified," López said.

The rush is on across La Guaira, the state on Venezuela's northern coast hardest hit by the powerful back-to-back June 24 earthquakes, to identify loved ones before it's too late. With at least 2,295 people killed, Venezuela is overwhelmed with bodies that officials are struggling to collect, identify and preserve for loved ones to claim. Thousands are still missing.

José Antonio Toledo, López's 25-year-old son-in-law, was found under the building where he was working as a security guard when the quakes struck. Crews took his body to a local hospital, where staff turned them away because there was no space. The body was sent to another facility and eventually transferred to an open parking lot.

A forensic doctor helped the family find him days later, on Saturday. But once they identified his body, they didn't know what to do with it because they couldn't afford the \$450 that a funeral home was charging.

At almost midnight on Saturday, López got word that the mayor's office was offering them a free space at a local cemetery, but they had to move quickly to not lose the spot. An hour later, López and her daughter trudged up a hill leading to the cemetery and buried Toledo.

"He was an exemplary person, a boy who liked helping people," López said.

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They saved him from a mass grave that many fear is coming as they search for the bodies of their loved ones.

The number of bodies found is expected to soar

Forensic technician Joel Mirabal has worked for seven days straight since the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes struck.

The 45-year-old estimates that in 60% to 70% of cases, there's a relative or neighbor available to identify a body when he comes to pick it up. Even so, it's a struggle, he said, with many relying on tattoos, scars or familiar clothing.

"They don't look even 10% like what they were in real life," he said of the victims.

If a body cannot be identified, it goes to forensic specialists working at La Guaira seaport. Private companies have donated large cooling containers to help preserve the bodies, but the number of dead keeps growing.

"Obviously, mass graves will have to be created," Mirabal said. "The collapse is massive, and the bodies are buried under many layers of debris."

Mirabal said he and other forensic technicians anticipate spending up to three months collecting bodies.

They drive around the affected areas every day, led by rescue crews and civilians who have recovered or spotted bodies.

"Many of the rescues are carried out by the people," he said of the thousands of ordinary Venezuelans who have pitched in for the recovery effort.

A dog trainer by profession who once helped the government locate drugs and missing people, Mirabal finds solace in the 12 dogs waiting for him at home, not counting the puppies. One of his favorites is Mila, a young black Dutch Shepherd who lay by his side on Thursday as he rested.

"It's not easy at all to witness the suffering and tragedy of your fellow human beings," he said.

Venezuelans wait in line to try to identify loved ones

Over the weekend, crews took dozens of bodies recovered from flattened buildings to a government-run health care facility in the city of La Guaira. They were left on a sweltering parking lot until families identified them, with funeral home workers estimating that more than 200 bodies were kept there at one point.

On Thursday, those who lost loved ones waited outside La Guaira seaport to identify bodies that authorities continue to pick up across the coastal state. Cars, including trucks and vans from funeral homes, formed a line outside a makeshift morgue.

Among those waiting was Robert Rodríguez. He sat on a concrete block, crestfallen, his legs dangling, waiting for his daughter to identify the body of his son-in-law. Rafael Alvarado died trapped inside a grocery store where he worked at the deli counter.

"He was her best friend," Rodríguez said, referring to the couple as tears soaked his blue face mask.

Rodríguez said the family found Alvarado in the rubble on Wednesday, his body freed and transported to the port on Thursday.

"I saw his shoes and knew it was him," Rodríguez said, adding that he warned his daughter. "I told her, 'Prepare yourself.'"

He said the family plans to cremate Alvarado and scatter his ashes on Isla de Margarita, the Venezuelan island that was his home.

Iran prepares for dayslong funeral for late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, killed in war

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran prepared Friday for the dayslong funeral of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with banners across Tehran urging the public to rise up in support of the Islamic Republic after the devastating war that killed the 86-year-old cleric.

The country's theocracy plans to see millions flood the streets of the capital beginning Saturday in scenes

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reminiscent to the burial of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.

That could provide a boost for Iran's government, particularly as it tries to leverage its hold on the Strait of Hormuz in negotiations with the United States over a permanent end to the war, and as concern still lingers that Israel could attack yet again.

Despite that, a powerful general who leads Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard emerged publicly for the first time in months for the funeral. Other top government officials will also likely be on hand alongside foreign dignitaries in a show of strength of Iran.

"As long as these people, who are chosen (by God), are on the field, we will definitely continue the same 'no to humiliation' policy that was founded by the Islamic Republic," said Mohammad Hossein Rezaei, a volunteer preparing for the funeral Friday.

"We will continue our policy of pursuing independence, and decisions will be made inside the country, and the people will decide their own fate," he said.

Caskets displayed in Tehran

Khamenei's flag-draped coffin sat at Tehran's Grand Mosalla alongside family members killed in the Israeli airstrike that came in the first moments of the war on Feb. 28.

The dead being honored include a son-in-law, his eldest daughter, a 14-month-old granddaughter and the wife of Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the previous leader who remains in hiding after reportedly being wounded in the attack.

Religious leaders and foreign dignitaries walked up to Khamenei's casket as a military band played or a man sang prayers. Iran's Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and President Masoud Pezeshkian, key leaders in the country's civilian government, all paid their respects.

Video published by Iranian state media showed an earlier mourning ceremony Thursday night for Khamenei. The black-clad mourners, whom state media identified as coming from families of those who lost loved ones in the 12-day war in 2025 and the recent Iran war, threw scarves and other items for attendants to brush against the coffin, a common practice in Iran seen as a blessing.

Later, state media showed images of Khamenei's casket draped by a red flag with white calligraphy reading "Ya Hussein," a Shiite expression in remembrance of the 7th-century martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson. It had been flying over the Imam Hussein golden-domed shrine in Karbala, Iraq. The flag also traditionally symbolizes both the spilled blood of someone unjustly killed and a call for vengeance.

Top general appears for first time in months

Photos published online by Iranian state media showed Gen. Ahmad Vahidi attending a meeting Thursday about the funeral of Khamenei, then sitting alongside his casket as Iran's theocracy held a smaller service for him Thursday night near the supreme leader's former home in downtown Tehran.

"They must know that the pure blood of our martyred imam will mark another turning point in the victories of beloved Islam across the global arena," Vahidi told state television in comments aired Friday. "They will take to their graves the wish to see this nation surrender. This nation will rise higher day by day through this pure blood."

Vahidi has become a major player in formulating Iran's tough stance in negotiating a possible permanent end to the war with the United States, experts say. He had not been seen publicly since Feb. 8, weeks before the Iran war began. Israel killed top leaders in Iran's military and government during the war, and has threatened the life of Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei as well. Vahidi is believed to be part of a small clique in direct contact with the younger Khamenei.

It remains unclear whether Khamenei will appear at his father's funeral. His father appeared in 1989 at Khomeini's funeral, weeping visibly, as he began his journey to lead Iran for decades with an iron fist while confronting the West.

Israel's repeated threats to kill Khamenei drew a warning from Iran's joint military command Thursday.

"We warn the enemies of a strong Iran, especially the United States, the Israeli regime and their regional and extraregional accomplices, to avoid any miscalculation and to consider the harsh and regret-inducing responses that the sons of the Iranian nation in the armed forces will give to any threat or aggression against our beloved country," the military command said.

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Funeral to go on for days

Beginning Saturday, Iran will hold the dayslong funeral for Khamenei and his body will be transported to cities in both Iran and neighboring Iraq. Authorities plan to shut down streets, airspace and daily life in Tehran as mourners commemorate the life of Khamenei.

In Tehran, images of the late Khamenei's fist could be seen in banners and in a giant statue in Tehran's Enghelab Square, framed by what appeared to be ballistic missiles flying through the air. In his first message to the nation, read by a state television anchor, Mojtaba Khamenei said he saw his father's body after his death with raised, clenched fist.

The banners read in Arabic, English and Farsi: "We must rise."

"This fist is the clenched fist of all us Muslims," taxi driver Jafar Javadi said. "The leader's fist is a sign all our fists are clenched and they (the enemies) will be destroyed with these fists, God willing. We will continue chanting death to America and death to Israel with the same clenched fist."

Erdogan's warm ties with Trump offer Turkey an edge ahead of NATO summit

By SEUNG MIN KIM and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has berated and belittled many of his European counterparts expected to attend next week's NATO summit in Turkey. But host Recep Tayyip Erdogan has drawn on his close ties with the U.S. president to secure his presence at the Ankara event — an appearance that may even come with a significant gift related to Turkish defense.

Trump has frequently lavished praise on the Turkish president, calling him a "hell of a leader" and a good friend. "I would not have gone for most people," Trump said last week. "But he called me up. He said: 'Please, I have it in Turkey. You got to be there. The United States has to be in there.' And so I'm going out of respect to President Erdogan."

Leveraging that respect has helped Erdogan avoid the disarray that the U.S. president's absence would cause the alliance, particularly at a time when Trump has been repeatedly threatening to pull U.S. forces from Europe and scale back America's role in NATO, unsettling allies. Trump has long rebuked other NATO countries over their defense spending — and claimed last year's pledge to collectively boost it as a major personal win — while more recently clashing with them for failing to back his war against Iran.

But Trump has sweetened the deal for Erdogan by also hinting that he could make news during his visit related to jet engines and the potential sale of F-35 fighter jets barred for years because of Turkey's closeness with Moscow.

The Republican president's affinity for strongmen leaders has long made him an admirer of Erdogan, who amassed power in Turkey first as its prime minister and now in his 13th year as president.

"His relationship with Erdogan, which is pretty strong, is consistent with what seems to be a pattern of his preference," said Philip Gordon, who served as national security adviser for Vice President Kamala Harris. "It has often been pointed out he seems to have better relationships with adversaries and autocrats, and he certainly says nicer things about them than with allies."

Gordon, now at the Brookings Institution, added, "Erdogan is taking full advantage of it."

Erdogan snubbed Biden but bets on Trump

Trump — who is expected to have a bilateral meeting with Erdogan on the sidelines of the NATO summit — will be the first U.S. president to visit Turkey since Barack Obama in 2015. By contrast, U.S. President Joe Biden's administration kept Erdogan at arm's length during his four years in office over Turkey's democratic backsliding and close ties to Russia.

Opposition parties and human rights organizations have accused Erdogan of undermining democracy and curbing freedom of expression. They say baseless investigations and prosecutions of human rights activists, journalists, opposition politicians and others remain a persistent problem in Turkey.

Soner Cagaptay of the Washington Institute said Erdogan and Trump "clicked" personally during Trump's first term. When Biden extended an invitation in 2024 for Erdogan to visit the U.S. after Turkey endorsed

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Finland and Sweden's NATO membership, Erdogan decided not to go.

"That was Erdogan's way of signaling to Trump, 'Hey, you are going to probably win the elections,'" Cagaptay said. "I think Trump saw that as a giant gesture."

Trump signals steps toward jet sales for Turkey

During a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte last week, a reporter asked Trump whether he was taking "a big gift bag for Erdogan" on the trip, noting that Ankara wants F-110 jet engines and F-35 fighter jets.

"Yeah, I think so," Trump responded. "Yeah, I'm going to probably do something that's going to make him very happy." Trump had also suggested last September that the U.S. could soon start selling F-35s to Turkey.

Turkey was barred from the program in 2019, after it purchased Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems. U.S. officials have feared that Turkey's use of the Russian system could enable Moscow to gather information on the F-35's capabilities.

At the Oval Office meeting, Vice President JD Vance said Washington was exploring ways to sell Turkey the jets, emphasizing that any sale would ensure Turkey has complied with U.S. law. There is significant bipartisan opposition on Capitol Hill to selling the F-35s to Turkey as long as Ankara is in possession of the Russian missile defense systems, including from influential Republicans such as Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch of Idaho.

Meanwhile, the F-110 jet engines that Turkey is seeking to purchase would power its domestically produced KAAN fighter jets. The State Department last week took a step toward making those sales, sending key lawmakers a notice that it planned to bypass congressional opposition to more than \$700 million of the jet engine sales to Ankara, according to two people granted anonymity to discuss details of a nonpublic notification.

"In this case, the State Department did not even attempt to justify its decision," New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement last week. "It did not invoke any emergency authority, did not present a written rationale, and for months refused to make a good-faith effort to brief me on implications of the sale for the U.S.-Turkey relationship, Turkey's continued possession of the Russian S-400 system, and other regional security concerns."

The relationship between the U.S. and Turkey is thawing in other ways, too. Earlier this year, the Justice Department dropped a major case against Turkey's state-owned Halkbank, which had been accused of helping Iran evade U.S. sanctions.

Erdogan lauds Trump's friendship and phone calls

When he returned to the White House for his second term, Trump appointed a close friend as ambassador to Turkey: Tom Barrack, a longtime ally who also served as the chairman of his inaugural committee. "Barrack is playing a crucial role as a facilitator in the relationship," said Ahmet Kasim Han, a professor of international relations at Ankara's TED University.

Erdogan and Trump have frequently held telephone calls to discuss Syria, Gaza and the wider Middle East, and Turkey joined Trump's Board of Peace aimed at overseeing the ceasefire in Gaza. Trump claimed this month that he asked Erdogan to stay out of the war in Iran and that the Turkish leader complied, though there is no indication that Turkey had ever intended to get involved.

Trump expressed admiration for Erdogan even while standing beside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a joint press conference last year. Netanyahu, whose government is at odds with Ankara, had hoped to win Trump's support for pushing back on Turkish influence in Syria, but instead found himself watching as Trump showered praises on Erdogan and urged Netanyahu to be "reasonable."

Last year, after meeting with Trump at the NATO summit in The Hague, Erdogan told reporters that the U.S. president is quick to return his calls, an anecdote that illustrated their close ties.

"With my friend Trump, we are opening the door to a new era in Turkish-American relations," Erdogan said. "The process of telephone diplomacy between us has never exceeded 24 hours so far. When we call, the other side responds within 24 hours."

The far-right Alternative for Germany is buoyant as it eyes a slice of power in regional elections

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The far-right Alternative for Germany is in a buoyant mood as it holds a convention this weekend. It is capitalizing on the unpopularity of a government that's trying to reform the sluggish economy, and eyeing promising prospects of power in an eastern region this fall.

Yet the anti-migration nationalist party is as polarizing as ever. Its meeting is expected to draw tens of thousands of protesters to the eastern city of Erfurt.

An established political force

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, is meeting to elect its leaders, which German parties do every two years. It will aim to put on a show of unity as it extends the terms of Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, who have run the party together for four years.

In last year's national election, AfD achieved the best showing by a far-right party since World War II. Its second-place finish left it as the biggest opposition party nationally and the strongest political force in Germany's formerly communist east. Its support has since climbed above the 20.8% it won then, with recent assessments putting it in first place.

Weidel said recently that "2026 is a year of destiny for AfD." Mainstream parties say they won't work with it, a stance often known as a "firewall."

But it hopes to win 40% of the vote or more in a state election Sept. 6 in the eastern region of Saxony-Anhalt. That could put it on course for an absolute majority or in a position where it might try to attract defectors, paving the way for its first state governor.

Another eastern state election follows two weeks later in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and AfD is optimistic there too.

A slice of power

"AfD is standing before the gates of power, to some extent," said Albrecht von Lucke, a political expert who edits the magazine *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*.

AfD's first head of a county administration was elected in 2023 in Thuringia, the state where Erfurt is located. No more have followed since, as enough voters rallied around mainstream candidates to prevent a repeat.

But leading a state administration would be a far bigger prize. Germany's 16 states have extensive powers, for example in running the education system and in overseeing security matters.

Opponents worry about the prospect of AfD replacing large numbers of civil servants if it governs Saxony-Anhalt, and about the possibility of confidential information ending up in far-right circles or even Russia. "An AfD interior minister would be a security risk," Gregor Maier, Thuringia's center-left interior minister, told ARD television.

AfD rejects concerns about it running a state government. "We will prove that we can do it better, and that is exactly what the old parties are afraid of," Chrupalla said this week at a rally in Berlin.

Von Lucke, however, said it would be "a huge challenge" for the party to show it can govern Saxony-Anhalt well, with internal conflicts likely. "A lot speaks for this not succeeding," he said.

A government under pressure

AfD has been helped by the deep unpopularity of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's national coalition government, which took office 14 months ago with pledges to reform and turn around Germany's economy, Europe's biggest. It is now embarking on potentially painful change after a long period of economic stagnation, but has yet to persuade voters that it can produce results.

Merz has pleaded for patience.

"It is unrealistic always just to lament decline, mope and wait for a big bang," he said at an industry meeting recently. "There isn't going to be one. We are in a reform process ... and we are moving forward in this process."

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"We want to show that solutions are possible from the political center of this country, that we also recognize the problems correctly," he added.

But AfD has long become adept at harnessing discontent with issues well beyond its signature theme of curbing migration, which powered its rise in the mid-2010s.

It has been supportive of the Trump administration's general approach, while criticizing the war in Iran. It also has long called for lifting of sanctions against Russia and opposes weapons deliveries to Ukraine. Merz, Chrupalla said, "thinks he has to escalate against Russia, like in the Cold War. He should be building bridges."

A party under scrutiny

AfD is locked in a battle with Germany's domestic intelligence agency over the latter's assessment of the party. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution announced last year that it was classifying AfD as a proven right-wing extremist group, but suspended the designation after a legal challenge. In February, a Cologne court said the agency can't use the designation while it considers the party's lawsuit in detail.

Some want to see the party banned, and protesters expected to turn out in force on Saturday and Sunday likely will underline those calls. But Germany's supreme court has set the bar for banning parties very high in the past.

Opponents of the idea are wary of handing AfD a victory by having a plea for a ban rejected after lengthy proceedings. Merz and conservative allies say the priority should be for the government to prove it can improve Germans' lives.

In a 2025 report issued on Tuesday, the intelligence agency said there were no indications that the party had backed off its problematic views.

"Many statements by the AfD and its representatives reflect an understanding of the nation that is based on ethnicity and ancestry and contradicts the understanding of the nation enshrined in Germany's constitution," it said. It pointed to calls for the "remigration" of millions of people and to regular talk of an allegedly planned "great replacement" of the population.

AfD vehemently rejects accusations of extremism and argues the agency is being weaponized by mainstream parties.

Australian prime minister condemns delay of changes to child social media ban

By ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Friday condemned senators who blocked changes to a world-first social media ban for children, saying tech giants would use the delay to destroy incriminating documents that could be used as evidence against them.

The government this week introduced to Parliament amendments aimed at increasing powers of the eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, Australia's online safety watchdog, to enforce the ban on Australian children younger than 16 from holding accounts on platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube that has been in place since December.

The amendments would have given Inman Grant power to demand documents as well as information from platforms about their efforts to exclude young children. She can currently only demand information.

But the conservative opposition Liberal Party and minor Australian Greens party referred the draft legislation Thursday to an eight-week Senate inquiry. The center-left Labor Party government does not hold a majority in the Senate.

"It is outrageous the delay because what the eSafety Commissioner has said very clearly is that that will allow the platforms to go and just delete a whole lot of material," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"Whereas if it was passed yesterday, that would have been the date from which these demands could be made by the commissioner. So then fines can be issued," he added.

The amendments would also give the commissioner power to demand information from third parties, including age assurance technology providers, to test claims made by platforms about how children continued to circumvent the ban.

The bill would double the maximum fine to 99 million Australian dollars (\$68 million) for platforms that fail to take reasonable steps to exclude children.

Greens Sen. David Shoebridge, who has always opposed the social media ban, questioned why a fine that had never been issued needed to be doubled.

"Doubling penalties that they've never used doesn't seem to me to be a meaningful measure," Shoebridge told Sky News Australia. "Is that really going to be the thing that keeps kids safe online?"

Opposition communications spokesperson Sen. Sarah Henderson said the amendments needed to be tougher.

"This is a social media ban which is failing; a half-baked law which is poorly designed, which was rushed, which is badly implemented and which is not working," Henderson said.

"We will interrogate this bill properly and, frankly, I think the amendments before the Parliament need to be tougher," she added.

Parliament passed the initial legislation with overwhelming support in 2024. The 10 targeted platforms were given more than a year to implement the ban.

Many countries who have implemented or are planning similar restrictions have been closely watching progress of Australia's ban.

The government initially reported more than 5 million children had accounts removed, deactivated or restricted after the ban became law.

But eSafety reported in March that seven in 10 children who held accounts on restricted platforms on Dec. 10 when the ban took effect remained on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok.

Inman Grant said in April she was considering court action against those platforms and YouTube, alleging they were not taking reasonable steps to exclude children.

She had been satisfied with progress made by the remaining restricted platforms: X, Kick, Reddit, Threads and Twitch.

Communications Minister Anika Wells said this week she had received monthly updates from eSafety since March and "we are not seeing improvements."

What to know about the funeral and burial of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Months after the killing of Iran's supreme leader at the start of its war with the United States and Israel, mourners will hold a dayslong funeral and burial for the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The mourning period will see Khamenei's body carried through cities in both Iran and neighboring Iraq. Iran's theocracy likely will encourage the public, government employees and paramilitary forces to fill the streets in his honor.

Khamenei, who led Iran for nearly four decades, was killed on Feb. 28 when the U.S. and Israel jointly launched the war. The funeral was delayed as the war raged.

The funeral will serve as a test for Iran's battered theocracy and its ability to summon a mass show of support, particularly as the funeral comes six months after security forces' crackdown on nationwide protests against Khamenei's rule.

A large turnout also could raise the risk of deadly stampedes. One marred the funeral of Iran's first supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

An uneasy ceasefire period, capped by an interim deal with the United States, likely gave authorities the confidence to hold the ceremony and have top officials appear. Israel throughout the war killed senior

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leaders, in at least one case using public appearances to track them.

But it remains unclear whether Khamenei's son, Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, will make his first public appearance during the ceremonies. The younger Khamenei, believed to have been wounded in the attack that killed his father, remains in hiding.

Here's what to know about the funeral set to begin Saturday in Iran's capital, Tehran.

Khamenei's funeral to last for days

Khamenei's body will be on display at Tehran's Grand Mosalla on Saturday and Sunday. On Monday, it will be paraded through the streets of Tehran before being taken to the Shiite seminary city of Qom, some 120 kilometers (75 miles) to the south. Tuesday will see Khamenei honored there.

On Wednesday, Khamenei's body will be taken to Karbala, Iraq, home to the shrine of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad who long has been a symbol of resistance for the Shiite faithful. Wednesday also will mark the anniversary of the protests against Khamenei's rule, which saw thousands killed by security forces.

Khamenei finally will be brought to Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city.

Khamenei will be buried at a holy Shiite shrine

Authorities say Khamenei will be buried in Mashhad at the Imam Reza shrine.

Imam Reza was Shiite Islam's eighth imam. Millions of pilgrims visit the shrine each year. A hadith, or saying, states that anyone with sorrow or sin will be relieved by visiting there.

Many prominent Shiite clerics have been buried there, as was Iran's late President Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash in 2024.

Funeral for Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini saw millions mourn

On June 6, 1989, millions of Iranians turned out in the streets to bury Khomeini, who led the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The situation quickly got out of control. People beat their chests rhythmically in the summer heat, the wails of women cutting through the noise.

Mourners rushed the casket, causing the 86-year-old religious leader's white-wrapped body to tumble into the crowd. Initial reports said the chaos killed at least eight people and hurt some 11,000 others.

There's concern that a similar stampede may break out during Khamenei's funeral, should the crowds be into the millions. The burial of the late Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani saw a stampede that killed at least 56 people and hurt more than 2000 in 2020.

The funeral comes as Iran war interim deal is challenged

The interim deal reached in June created a 60-day window to negotiate terms of a final deal to end the Iran war, including the issues of Iran's nuclear program and the Strait of Hormuz.

Technical talks began in Qatar this week, but they have been complicated by deep disagreements, and several days of crossfire between the U.S. and Iran, over the future of the strait.

A grand jury indicts Louisiana's attorney general in a fight over changes to New Orleans courts

BY SAFIYAH RIDDLE and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

Louisiana's attorney general was indicted Thursday over accusations she threatened the jobs of New Orleans leaders who fought a Republican-led overhaul of local courts in the heavily Democratic city.

The 16-count indictment against Republican Liz Murrill, handed up by a New Orleans grand jury, charges Louisiana's first female attorney general with intimidation and malfeasance. At the center of the case are deepening rifts between state leaders in Louisiana, which is heavily Republican, and Democrats who control the state's most prominent city.

Republican Gov. Jeff Landry promised a swift pardon, saying Murrill would not have her reputation tarnished by an "Orleans Kangaroo court." Mayor Helena Moreno, a Democrat, was among those who had accused the state's top law enforcement official in May of making threats against public officials.

Murrill called the case against her "retaliatory, meritless, and unconstitutional." Late Thursday, Murrill said she had filed for an emergency stay with the Louisiana Supreme Court.

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"I will not back down. I will continue enforcing the law, fighting corruption, and doing the job the people of Louisiana elected me to do," she wrote on X.

For months, political tensions intensified between Louisiana Republicans and New Orleans officials over a new law that abolished a court clerk office won by an exoneree, Calvin Duncan, who spent nearly three decades in prison. The change consolidated that job with another clerk's office, which Republican supporters said would make the local judicial system more efficient.

The change was staunchly opposed by New Orleans leaders, and in May, the city council set a special election that would have given Duncan a chance to win the newly combined job. Murrill responded by warning local officials in letters that they could lose their offices for violating state "usurper" laws, which forbid support for an unauthorized officeholder.

"We're very interested in elected officials in New Orleans not being intimidated or threatened by letter or any other way," special prosecutor Laurie White told reporters.

Bond set for Louisiana attorney general

Bond for Murrill was set at \$400,000 on Thursday, according to court records.

Landry said he was ordering state police to investigate what he called "alleged improprieties" of the grand jury and those who ran it.

"The criminal justice system is a circus at its finest in Orleans and we will not have any of that!" he wrote on X.

The Republican Attorneys General Association said that making statements to local officials — in writing — was simply "issuing a legal opinion and warning public officials about the law" as part of her official duties. It called the indictment "as outrageous as it is dangerous."

Moreno, who was elected in January and was defiant after Murrill sent the letters, on Thursday called it a "matter for the courts" and did not directly address the allegations.

"My focus, as always, remains on fulfilling the responsibilities the people of New Orleans elected me to carry out," Moreno said.

Elected clerk says state targeted him

Duncan has said he believes state officials were retaliating against him in eliminating the job he won with 68% of the vote. Murrill and Landry have long refused to acknowledge his innocence, though he's listed on the National Registry of Exonerations.

Republicans have said the change was not personal and supporters have noted that the offices of criminal and civil clerks of courts are combined in other parishes.

Duncan was a jailhouse lawyer who later graduated from law school. He founded a nonprofit dedicated to expanding incarcerated people's access to the court system and was the driving force behind a 2020 U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended nonunanimous jury convictions.

Duncan spent more than 28 years in prison over a fatal shooting during a robbery in 1981.

The night before a 2011 hearing to consider new evidence, prosecutors offered to reduce Duncan's sentence to the time he'd already served in prison if he pleaded guilty to manslaughter and armed robbery. Duncan took the deal and was freed but didn't give up on clearing his name.

In 2021, a judge agreed that Duncan had been unjustly convicted and vacated his sentence altogether. Landry and Murrill have pointed to the 2011 plea deal in objecting to Duncan calling himself exonerated.

Man with a Tibetan flag dies after setting himself on fire in front of UN headquarters

NEW YORK (AP) — A man with a Tibetan flag in front of the United Nations headquarters in New York set himself on fire and died Thursday, according to officials.

Law enforcement responded to a 911 call at about 6:30 p.m. and found a 52-year-old man with severe burns throughout his body, the New York Police Department said.

The man was taken to the hospital and later pronounced dead, according to police.

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Authorities were investigating. Officials were not able to comment on what prompted the man to set himself on fire.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

The man's name has not been released because his family hasn't been notified yet.

A U.N. spokesperson said the incident happened after all scheduled meetings were finished for the day and no U.N. business was affected.

China says Tibet has been part of its territory for more than seven centuries, and its Communist Party has governed the Himalayan region since 1951. But many Tibetans say they were essentially independent for most of their history and have protested what they regard as Beijing's heavy-handed rule.

There have been more than 150 self-immolations by Tibetans between 2009 and 2022, according to the International Campaign for Tibet.

China does not recognize Tibet's government-in-exile, the Central Tibetan Administration, and it has not held dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010.

Trump got the Senate candidates he wanted. How much will he spend to help them?

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump reshaped this year's U.S. Senate map by sidelining some Republican incumbents and promoting loyalists to replace them. Now the question is whether he'll put his money where his mouth is.

With four months to go until November's elections, it's still unclear how much MAGA Inc., the country's largest political war chest with \$382 million in the bank as of last month, plans to spend on key races. The silence has persisted even as Senate Republican leaders have urged Trump's team, both privately and publicly, to pick up the tab for the president's decisions.

Front and center is Texas, where Trump successfully endorsed fiery conservative Ken Paxton over Sen. John Cornyn, a choice that some Republicans grumble has turned a safe election into a toss-up that will drain resources away from other battlegrounds. Democratic nominee James Talarico, a state lawmaker, has made Paxton's history of corruption allegations a central target of his campaign.

"The president picked Paxton, and he's got \$350 million dollars," Cornyn recently told Semafor. "I think he can spend his money."

Another challenge has emerged in North Carolina, where Sen. Thom Tillis declined to run for reelection after feuding with Trump last year over healthcare spending. Trump backed Michael Whatley, his former handpicked chair of the Republican National Committee, to run instead, and Democrats hope to flip the seat with former Gov. Roy Cooper.

Some in Republican campaign leadership are expecting MAGA Inc. to pitch in for Whatley in North Carolina, where the state's several metro media markets can be pricey.

Republicans will likely be able to count on generous support from well-funded official party committees, which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled earlier this week should be allowed to make unlimited direct contributions to candidates' campaigns. But even that sum falls short of what Trump has stockpiled in MAGA Inc. Even though the president is constitutionally barred from running again, he began raising money shortly after winning a second term, and he's regularly held fundraisers at his resort properties where tickets cost \$1 million per person.

James Blair, the former White House political director who left his government job to coordinate the president's midterm efforts, was evasive in an interview with Sean Spicer, a former Republican spokesman who hosts a podcast.

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"The president is going to expend substantial resources to win the midterms," said Blair. "He cares deeply about the party winning."

As a super PAC, MAGA Inc. can raise unlimited money from individuals and corporations. However, it is barred from coordinating with individual campaigns or national Republican committees, which adds to the sense of mystery surrounding its plans.

It's been more than two months since Blair, along with White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, pollster Tony Fabrizio and political adviser Chris LaCivita huddled at Washington's Waldorf Astoria to discuss MAGA Inc.'s strategy.

The huddle was focused on assembling teams of vendors, such as advertisers, canvassing providers and digital media company leaders who had worked with the Trump team in key states during previous elections and who would be dispatched once plans were in place.

The president has spent much of the year waging a war of retribution against Republicans who have crossed him. He viewed Cornyn as insufficiently loyal, held a grudge against Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana for voting to convict him in an impeachment trial and assailed Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky as the "worst Republican Congressman in history." All of them lost their primaries to Trump-backed challengers.

Cornyn's loss weighs heavily on Senate Republicans, who suggest that Paxton could cost the party an extra \$100 million to defend the seat.

Senate Leadership Fund, the principal super PAC aligned with Senate Majority Leader John Thune, is still expected to spend money on advertising in Texas but not play a central role given its obligations elsewhere.

Democrats must net four seats to take the majority, and they see Alaska, Maine, North Carolina and Ohio as their best opportunities. The Senate Leadership Fund has already committed to spending \$342 million across these four states, plus Iowa, Georgia, Michigan and New Hampshire.

When Paxton came to Washington after winning the nomination on May 26, he had a cordial meeting with Thune focused on moving forward together, according to people with knowledge of the conversation who were not authorized to speak publicly.

Later that day, Thune suggested that Trump should be putting up money for a candidate whom Senate Republicans hadn't asked for.

"We will do what we need to do to make sure the state stays red," Thune told reporters. "But I'm certainly hopeful the president and the resources he can bring to bear will be engaged."

"It's going to be an expensive race," he added.

Mikel Oyarzabal's 2 goals send dominant Spain past Austria 3-0 and into round of 16 at the World Cup

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Although Spain arrived at this year's World Cup as a championship favorite and then went unbeaten through group play, those first three matches weren't overly impressive.

When the knockout rounds finally arrived Thursday, this star-studded team turned on its full talent and served notice that Spain can be just as good as everybody thought — and it's probably getting better.

Mikel Oyarzabal scored two goals and Spain beat Austria 3-0 for its first World Cup victory in a knockout match since winning the title in 2010.

Pedro Porro added a goal in the second half as La Roja put on its most impressive performance of the tournament while demonstrating offensive creativity and defensive rigor throughout its vaunted lineup.

"The great teams step up when it's needed," Spain coach Luis De La Fuente said. "We played a great match. We came close to perfection, but we must keep improving."

While Oyarzabal, fullback Marc Cucurella and winger Lamine Yamal all had sensational moments in attack, Spain also has yet to allow a goal at this year's World Cup. Austria failed to get a shot on target, so Unai Simón didn't have to make a save while keeping his fourth consecutive clean sheet and setting a World Cup record with 519 consecutive shutout minutes dating back to the last tournament in Qatar.

Everybody in a red shirt was happy after a dominant day in the Los Angeles area — but nobody was

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satisfied, either.

"I'm happy to have helped the team for us to go through another round," Oyarzabal said. "Now just rest and get ready for the next one. It was a complicated match. We knew that it was going to be difficult against a very physical team, but we had a very good day and played a good match."

La Roja will next face Portugal, a 2-1 winner over Croatia, in Dallas on Monday in the round of 16.

Yamal had four of Spain's 10 shots on goal while getting wild cheers from the pro-Spanish sellout crowd at SoFi Stadium. The 18-year-old Barcelona sensation played his longest stretch of the tournament before coming off in the 85th minute, moments after Austria defender David Alaba deflected Yamal's hard shot off the goal line.

Spain got its marquee offense from Oyarzabal, the Real Sociedad captain who has four goals at this year's World Cup by opening the scoring in the 36th minute and clinching the victory in the 89th. Cucurella had assists on both of Oyarzabal's goals, demonstrating an excellent connection from the left side.

"Our only focus is to remain thinking that we need to exceed our own expectations," De La Fuente said. "Today's match is just the prelude to what's next, because in the next match we will try to play even better. We have wonderful players. Their behavior, their attitude, their talent is insurmountable."

Goalkeeper Alexander Schlager made six saves in an outstanding performance for Austria, which reached the knockout rounds of its first World Cup since 1998 by squeaking out a late draw with an injury-time goal against Algeria. Coach Ralf Rangnick's team hasn't won a knockout match at the World Cup since 1954.

"I cannot remember any unforced error they made," Rangnick said of Spain. "I think they showed us their best performance. I would dare to say we did not only meet the European champion, but possibly the next world champion. If you want to win it, you need to win against Spain. But if we had a lucky punch, we could have had a chance."

Spain is firmly back in World Cup contention for the first time since winning it all in South Africa 16 years ago. La Roja lost two knockout matches and got eliminated in the group stage over the past three World Cups.

But Spain is now unbeaten 35 straight competitive matches since March 2023. La Roja won the 2023 Nations League and the 2024 European Championship in that stretch, but also lost the 2025 Nations League final on penalties to Portugal.

Following a cautious start against Austria, Spain unleashed its full attack after the first-half hydration break. Three minutes after Schlager made a diving fingertip save on Oyarzabal's low shot, the Spain player came unmarked in the penalty area and coolly converted Cucurella's pass.

Spain kept up its pressure after halftime, playing some of its most creative soccer of the tournament. It was rewarded when Alex Baena broke in on the left side and lifted a pass to an unmarked Porro, who banged home an emphatic header for his first international goal.

"People have their opinions, (but) we've been doing our job since Day 1," Porro said. "We believe in ourselves, and whatever people on the outside say is fair enough."

Oyarzabal wrapped it up by converting another sharp pass from Cucurella.

Simón has only had to make four saves in his four straight shutouts. His World Cup shutout streak of 519 minutes broke the tournament record set by Italy great Walter Zenga at the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

Marko Arnautović came on as a second-half substitute for Austria. Rangnick said afterward that the 37-year-old striker had played his final international match.

'Right under our noses and nobody was able to help them.' 16 kids found in squalor shocks Ohio town

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

HAMDEN, Ohio (AP) — Just days after authorities removed 16 siblings from a squalid home and arrested their parents and grandparents, the question looms over their southern Ohio village: How could this have happened, for years, unnoticed, right here?

Neighbors of the family in tiny Hamden, employees at local stores where they shopped and even the

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investigators who responded to the scene have been left to wonder that aloud and to themselves, and the limited information shared by investigators doesn't offer a full answer.

The children weren't enrolled in school, the family moved around over the past two decades, and neighbors said they'd never spotted the kids. The children remained mostly confined to a small room in the house, investigators said, under deplorable conditions.

"Right under our noses and nobody was able to help them sooner," said Emily Collins, 27, owner of VC Farm & Floral in nearby McArthur, as she lamented how the case goes against the grain of the tight-knit community.

"It's just crazy with all the wonderful things going on in our little Hallmark town and this is what puts us on the radar. It's really sad," said the mother of three, who pulled out her chalk and decorated the sidewalk in front of her shop with bright flowers and stars drawn for the Fourth of July to cheer herself up.

Authorities said they had gone to the home Tuesday on an unrelated investigation and discovered the children — ages 1 1/2 to 18 years old — some of whom were unable to speak.

Seven were taken to hospitals, including one who was in critical condition, investigators said. Their current conditions weren't immediately known Thursday. Child welfare officials have temporary custody of the children.

Lawyers: Let the case 'play out'

Four people who are the children's parents and grandparents were arrested on child endangerment charges. Gary Siders Jr., 36, Gary Siders, 73, Elizabeth Siders, 33, and Christina Siders, 67, pleaded not guilty to child endangerment. Bond was set at \$300,000 each.

The children's mother, Elizabeth Siders, married their father Gary Siders Jr. when she was 15, and all of the children are theirs, her attorney, Thomas Stolly, told The Associated Press. She was "crying and exhausted" when he met with her on Thursday, Stolly said.

"In fact, my client's first question to me when I walked into the jail and introduced myself was about her kids. She asked if her children were OK, she asked if I knew where they were, and she asked when she'd be able to see them again," Stolly said.

He wasn't able to answer those questions, "but I thought it was telling that her first concern was not, 'When can I get out of jail,' but was 'Are my children OK.'"

Stolly said his client told him that all of the children were born in area hospitals and she considers herself a full-time mom. She left high school after the 11th grade, he said, and Gary Siders Jr. was driving for Door Dash and looking for another job, he said.

Stolly said the prosecutor's office has not yet shared their evidence with him, but so far he hasn't seen anything that supports Ohio Attorney General Andy Wilson's description of the family as "pure evil."

"Evil requires malice, and I did not see any malice in Elizabeth," Stolly said.

He added: "I think that this is more so a case of isolation than a case of evil, and I think that there's an important distinction there. Because if that's all you know -- and you have to think someone at 15 years old doesn't know a whole lot about being an adult, about being a mother, about being a wife — and that's been your worldview for the past 17 or 18 years, you get shaped by that."

Stolly said Elizabeth didn't characterize herself as a victim, but "I think it may be too early to actually determine what was going on there."

"While the headlines may be sensational, there's a real human component to this and so I would ask people to give this process time to play out," Stolly said.

An attorney for the elder Siders also urged the public to wait before passing judgment.

"We ask that the community at large, as well as anyone who might have an interest in this case, to take a deep breath, step back, and let the case play out and the facts play out," Dorian Baum told The Associated Press.

Attorneys for Siders Jr. and Christina Siders declined to comment.

Little traffic on home's rural road

A man who lives three houses down from the Siders family said he had seen "no kids at all" there.

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"It's a sad situation," said Joseph Stewart, 60, who has lived in the "quiet neighborhood" for six years. Authorities wouldn't publicly share the nature of the other investigation that led them to the house Tuesday. However, court records show a warrant was issued for Siders Jr. that day on misdemeanor indecent exposure charges related to alleged incidents on four days in May. He has pleaded not guilty.

On Thursday, windows and doors at the formerly wide-open home, about 60 miles (97 kilometers) southeast of Columbus, had been boarded up. Police tape and piles of refuse remained.

The previous day, a door was ajar and heaps of trash and children's toys were visible inside. A wood deck and the backyard were filled with discarded tires, a high chair and other debris.

The house sits on a road tucked alongside a steep railroad embankment, where tracks carry rumbling trains to a rail yard in the village of fewer than 1,000 residents. The closest neighbors are separated by trees and thick brush, but the house is easily visible from the road.

Kids not seen in schools

Investigators said members of the family had moved around southern Ohio over the past two decades and that it looks like they avoided creating a medical or governmental paper trail. The Vinton County Local School District, the only district in the area, said it has no records indicating that any of the children were ever enrolled.

"These folks were pretty good at hiding these kids," Wilson, the state attorney general, said Wednesday.

The children's absence from school, and the apparent lack of regular visits with medical professionals, likely contributed to keeping the dire situation unknown, said Jacqueline Yahn, an associate professor at Ohio University.

"When kids are isolated or not participating, you don't have someone who's trained to know the clues," said Yahn, who specializes in rural education and poverty. "A well-check is called that for a reason: They're checking for well-being and development."

Investigators were reviewing whether the family was reported to any children's services agencies in the past.

The children spent most of their time in a room that was roughly 12 feet by 12 feet (3.5 meters by 3.5 meters), according to investigators, who noted that human waste was all around.

"They looked like almost feral animals. It was terrible," Wilson said.

Former Olympian indicted on felony charge over alleged Reflecting Pool vandalism

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and MEG KINNARD undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Olympian was indicted Thursday on a felony charge in what President Donald Trump has called vandalism of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, where a renovation project he launched has been riddled with problems.

David Hearn, a former Olympic canoe racer, was indicted on a single count of property destruction in Washington, D.C., court.

District of Columbia U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro said Hearn ripped up recently installed sealant on the pool in "a deliberate act" that caused more than \$1,000 in damage. She accused him of "forcefully and violently" pulling up the bottom liner "with both hands" and acting belligerently toward an employee who told him to stop.

"This is a case with tremendous evidence," she said, adding that authorities have made about six other misdemeanor arrests.

In a statement, Democracy Defenders Fund co-founder Norm Eisen and Mary Dohrmann, senior counsel at Washington Litigation Group, said that they represented Hearn and that the charges were "outrageous and should be alarming to every American." Eisen and Dohrmann construed the case as representative of "the misuse of government power against an ordinary citizen based on a concocted narrative."

Hearn didn't immediately return a phone call seeking comment. He previously told The Associated Press that he reached into the pool on June 19 to examine the newly peeled coating. He said he briefly touched

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a chunk that was still attached to the side of the pool, then let go shortly after a park worker told him to. "I'm a curious citizen," Hearn said in a telephone interview last month. "I reached down to see what it felt like. It was very rubbery."

Hearn, 67, of Bethesda, Maryland, owned a company that made composite materials used to build watercraft.

Saying that he stopped by the pool during a 64-mile bike ride, Hearn said he was detained by National Guard troops and U.S. Park Police for five hours before being released.

Trump said last month that federal authorities made "multiple arrests" of people he accused of vandalizing the Reflecting Pool as he struggled to explain why the \$16-million rehabilitation project he launched for the nation's 250th anniversary seemingly backfired. Without providing any substantiation, he also said vandals dumped fertilizer into the pool and slashed the coating with a box cutter.

In subsequent days, National Guard members and Park Police patrolled the deck around the Reflecting Pool as Trump's administration faced a self-imposed deadline to fix a botched renovation before the nation's 250th anniversary celebration. Contractors and federal workers used chemicals and ozone nanobubbles to combat an algae bloom, and Trump has said that problems most likely require draining the pool again for liner repairs.

Finding freedom from the heat on July 4th will be a challenge in eastern US

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Gaining freedom from the heat will be a challenge for the eastern U.S. heading into the long Fourth of July weekend, prompting some communities to cancel, postpone or otherwise alter their Independence Day plans.

Dangerous, record-breaking heat will continue across much of the central and eastern U.S. through Friday and will continue along the East Coast through the weekend, the National Weather Service said Thursday. Temperatures in the high 90s Fahrenheit (30 degrees Celsius) were forecast for the Northeast; New York and Boston both hit 100 degrees Thursday. Humidity is expected to make it feel even hotter, all but ensuring that sweat will dampen spirits at many celebrations marking 250 years of American independence.

"Anywhere you go in southern New England, you will be dealing with dangerous heat today, tomorrow and Saturday," said Bryce Williams, a meteorologist with the weather service.

Heat wreaks havoc with event schedules

In Boston, entrance to the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular will start at 4 p.m. instead of noon on Saturday because of the heat. In Philadelphia, officials shortened the route of a Thursday morning parade, canceled an afternoon all-American Block Party, and pushed back the start times of an evening picnic and concert at Independence Mall.

In Lower Windsor Township, Pennsylvania, an America 250 celebration including food trucks, games and the highway department's dump truck has been rescheduled for July 8. In Norristown, Pennsylvania, officials canceled a parade set for Saturday, citing the safety of residents, participants and first responders, though evening fireworks and an afternoon party featuring games, food, and music will go on as scheduled.

"The parade is one of our community's most beloved traditions, and we share in the disappointment of its cancellation, especially as we celebrate America's 250th birthday," Interim Municipal Administrator Jayne Musonye said.

Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania moved outdoor events indoors. Amtrak, meanwhile, canceled some train routes due to the heat Thursday, including the Acela between Boston and Washington, and said others may operate with reduced speeds resulting in delays through Saturday.

Baseball, Taylor Swift fans sweat it out

A heat dome — high-pressure systems above a region that trap heat and humidity — has been smothering parts of the U.S., from the Midwest to the East Coast. Beyond the holiday festivities, officials in many communities are taking steps to keep residents safe, including opening cooling centers. In Boston,

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several air-conditioned museums are offering free admission to city residents, and in Providence, Rhode Island, city pools and waterparks have extended their hours.

The temperature was 98 degrees by the time the Philadelphia Phillies started their home game against the Pittsburgh Pirates on Wednesday. Sixteen pallets of water bottles were given out for free.

Bill Christy, 69, of Philadelphia, was walking with two teen charges that he had brought along for company. "They're young, they can handle it," he said. "I'll just go up in the shade somewhere if I get hot."

Nearby a fife and drum corps marched up and down the lower concourse in full uniform.

"Usually it's wool regimental. But this is linen, it's cool," said Debbie Mayes of Ewing, New Jersey, part of the Washington Crossing Fife and Drums. "We're fine. They've been very kind to us, letting us take breaks and providing water."

In New York, Amanda Powell, of Little Rock, Arkansas, was among the Taylor Swift fans flocking to Madison Square Garden in hopes of seeing the superstar singer before her Friday wedding.

"It's super hot," she said. "Being from Arkansas, we thought we could handle the heat, but it's been very warm."

Central Park in Manhattan hit 100 degrees Thursday afternoon, marking the first time the iconic park reached triple digits since 2012, according to the National Weather Service.

Zoo employees work to keep animals cool

At the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston, workers offered up frozen blocks ice with herring for the African penguins, frozen pellets to the Nigerian dwarf goats and tossed frozen treats into the enclosure of the Western lowland gorillas, who scramble to grab and gobble them up.

"All of my animals have been doing a really great job of staying under the fan, staying near a sprinkler," zookeeper Brooke Cannon said as she offered Quinn frozen treats. "I'm running around with the hose hitting them a little bit there and there. Yeah, it's not their favorite, but you know sometimes you got to do what you got to do to make sure that they're not making poor choices."

Despite the heat, the zoo had plenty of visitors - though many took time to fan themselves or stand under misters to keep cool. Others were second-guessing their decision to visit.

"It's too hot in the summer and this is not the right time to come and visit zoo," Bhargavi Patha, who was with her husband and 14-month-old son, said as they headed to the lion enclosure. "The heat is exhausting us. We are draining and we had to drink a lot of water to see all the animals."

Electric grids feel the stress

As the heat bore down on New York, Mayor Zohran Mamdani urged people conserve energy by setting their air conditionings to 78 degrees — a step previous mayors, including former Mayor Rudy Giuliani, have advised — in order to avoid stressing the power grid. Nevertheless, the request drew a round of jeers from the Democratic mayor's conservative critics online.

By early Thursday afternoon, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul was asking everyone in the state to turn air conditioners to 75 degrees (24 Celsius) or higher, avoid using appliances unnecessarily and otherwise conserve electricity. Hochul, a Democrat, cited high demand and "unexpected load challenges."

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican who pokes at the mayor often on social media, responded on X "Is this what was meant by the warmth of collectivism?," spinning a phrase the democratic socialist employed in his inaugural address back at Mamdani.

The explosive growth of data centers are adding stress to electric grids, as operators in New York state, New England and the one stretching across 13 mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states all projected that electricity demand would peak on Thursday before falling back slightly on Friday.

Operators had not issued emergency calls to reduce consumption as of Thursday evening, as usage surged roughly 40% above a normal summer day.

PJM Interconnection, which operates the grid that serves 65 million people from New Jersey to Illinois, had projected that Thursday would set an all-time high for summer electricity demand, but it fell just short of 2006's record.

To prepare, PJM had sought — and received — an order from the U.S. Department of Energy that allows

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utilities to force data centers and other big energy users to disconnect from the grid and switch to backup power sources, such as diesel generators, before carrying out rolling blackouts to conserve energy.

A major new Canadian hydropower transmission line to New York City had gone out of service Wednesday because of an equipment problem in Canada, but the line was repaired and back in service by 12:30 p.m. Thursday, according to operator Hydro-Québec.

Permit obtained by AP shows schedule for Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's wedding

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's wedding will begin at 5 p.m. Friday and stretch until the early hours of Saturday morning, closing several blocks in the heart of Manhattan during the busy holiday weekend, according to a copy of a city permit obtained by The Associated Press and new details provided by police.

The application — for a "Special Event at MSG" — was approved Wednesday night by New York City's permitting office, according to a spokesperson for Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

The permit shows 100 guests will begin arriving at Madison Square Garden at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday for a "pre party celebration," which officials described as an intimate rehearsal dinner. Thursday evening, black sport utility vehicles were seen driving into a tented area, shielding views of who was going into MSG.

A full street closure will then go into effect overnight, allowing crews to erect a "drive through tent" next to a separate "entrance tent," according to the permit.

The "main event" will begin at 5 p.m. Friday, per the application, with the option to continue until 4 a.m. the next morning. That party can host up to 1,000 people, records show.

Beginning on Friday afternoon, several blocks surrounding the arena will be off-limits to vehicles and partially closed to pedestrians, according to information shared by police on Thursday afternoon.

Access to Penn Station — the busiest rail hub in the U.S., sitting directly below the arena — will be heavily restricted, with transit users urged to use a separate entrance further from the venue.

The approval of the permit comes as city officials and Swift's representatives have continued to stay silent about the festivities — angering some business owners and residents, who have called for more transparency around a private event that will soak up public resources.

A spokesperson for the NYPD did not respond to a question Thursday about the purpose of the street closures.

Behind the scenes, emails obtained by the AP show city officials have been aware of the wedding — and its impact on city streets — for nearly a month.

On June 8, the director of the city's street permitting office, Dawn Tolson, emailed several City Hall staffers to discuss a permit application "in association with the T&T wedding," an apparent reference to Taylor and Travis.

The application included a request for "full street closures" on July 3 and 4, under the subject line: "Wedding Bells Are Ringing."

Mamdani, who previously said the city would have to cut back on large scale events this summer due to the demands posed by the World Cup and America250 festivities, has declined to discuss the city's role in the wedding event.

"The NYPD will of course have a detail in place, but I'm not going to go into more specifics at this time," New York Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said at a news conference on Wednesday.

Michael O'Brien, who co-owns O'Briens Bar and Grill across from the arena, said the city should do more to publicize the impact on local businesses — and that the newlyweds-to-be should foot the bill for any lost revenue.

"This is, in my opinion, ridiculous," O'Brien said. "If they can afford to buy the permits, they can afford this big lavish ceremony, why don't they just buy out the local businesses instead of having us adversely affected?"

But others seemed unbothered by the secrecy and precautions around the much-anticipated nuptials. "She's just so important in everyone's life," said Alyssa Heinen, one of scores of Swift fans who gathered outside the arena on Thursday afternoon. "We grew up with Taylor Swift, and just seeing her now find love — I feel like it's inspiring to so many women. It's so nice to see her so happy."

Iran warns oil tankers to use approved routes in Strait of Hormuz or face a 'forceful response'

By JON GAMBRELL and DAVID McHUGH Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's joint military command warned Thursday that all oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz must use its approved routes or face a "forceful response," ratcheting up tensions again over a waterway crucial for international energy supplies.

The strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, has emerged as one of the top issues in negotiations seeking a permanent end to the Iran war. The statement from the Khatam al-Anbiya military command, reported by Iranian state television, comes after both U.S. and Iranian diplomats met with mediators Wednesday in Qatar.

Iran is preparing for the funeral of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the war's first moments in February. On Thursday night, Iranian state media broadcast images of what it said was the casket with Khamenei's remains arriving at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiya, for the farewell ceremony.

Hundreds were seen in the footage, praying and grieving near the casket covered with a green cloth. The weeklong official funeral is expected to start on Saturday.

It wasn't clear what sparked Iran's warning Thursday about oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz. However, the U.S. military's Central Command had put out a statement about a meeting with officials from Mideast nations in Bahrain that said "leaders underscored their shared commitment to the free flow of commerce through" the strait.

That could have been the phrase that angered Iran.

"Any failure to comply, deviation from the designated route, or disregard for the navigation protocols of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz will be met with an immediate and forceful response from the armed forces, endangering the security of the violating vessels," the Iranian statement said.

It also said that interference by U.S. forces in the strait "will be met with a rapid and decisive reaction."

Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the waterway.

The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they won't agree to Iran charging for passage through the strait. An effort by Oman and a United Nations agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore sparked attacks across the Mideast last weekend, highlighting the tensions.

Despite the attacks, ship traffic in the strait continued to rebound. At least 258 ships transited the waterway last week, a period that included Iranian strikes on two commercial vessels, according to marine data and analysis company Lloyd's List Intelligence. That's up from 138 ships the previous week.

Iran's attacks on June 25 and 27 "seem to have been forgotten," Richard Meade, editor-in-chief at Lloyd's, said Thursday during a webinar.

Traffic in the strait has slowed somewhat since the strikes and remains far below levels seen before the war, when about 130 vessels passed through daily. And with ship operators having to choose between complying with Iran's demands or braving the route off Oman watched by U.S. forces, "nothing about this situation is stable," Meade said.

"Routes are being chosen on an hour-by-hour basis ... and they are contingent on shifting political approvals and real-time security assessments," he said. "This is not the new normal."

Earlier this week, Iranian state television reported that a foreign ship got stuck in the strait after ignoring instructions from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. However, the vessel's shape, reported location

and other details indicate the ship is tied to Iran and appears to have been stranded for months.

Despite the tensions, Wednesday's talks saw "positive progress," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said. He told journalists that Pakistan hoped the next round of talks would be scheduled as soon as possible after Khamenei's funeral.

FACT FOCUS: Experts say Trump's claims linking Democrats to communism are inaccurate

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

President Donald Trump has been warning recently that communism will pose a threat to the U.S. if Democrats win in the upcoming midterm elections.

"It's the biggest threat to our country, including World War I, World War II, Pearl Harbor, September 11th," he said on Wednesday, segueing into a political message as he visited the newly constructed Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in North Dakota.

Last week, he referred to Democrats as "hard core, godless Communists" at the Faith & Freedom Coalition's 2026 policy conference.

Trump's latest round of attacks has followed primary victories by democratic socialist candidates. They are reminiscent of similar narratives he has employed throughout his political career.

But experts say his claims, echoed by Vice President J.D. Vance and other Republican leaders, are off base.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

TRUMP: "It's becoming a communist party. These are not social Democrats, these are hardcore, godless Communists."

THE FACTS: No candidate openly belonging to the U.S. Communist Party has ever been elected to state or federal office, according to experts. Although there are fringes of the Democratic Party that have expressed support for communist ideas, experts say that they still advocate for a market-based economy and that it is inaccurate to paint the entire party with such a broad brush. Trump recently began referring to Democrats pejoratively as "Dumocrats."

"The reality is that none of these major political figures in the Democratic Party, even those further out on the left, are identifying as communists," said Marc Selverstone, director of presidential studies at the University of Virginia's Miller Center for Public Affairs, adding that it's an opportunity to portray Democrats as marginal figures.

What is democratic socialism?

Selverstone, who authored a book on international communism, noted that Democrats who are more closely aligned with socialism and democratic socialism are still far from supporting basic communist ideals such as the abolition of private property or central economic planning.

Rather, democratic socialists believe in providing a more extensive social safety net within the confines of democracy. The movement often centers on securing universal healthcare, higher taxes on the wealthy and stricter corporate regulation.

Some democratic socialists belong to the Democratic Socialists of America, a political and activist organization — not a party.

How Trump uses the label

Over the years, Trump has labeled his opponents as communists and discussed the effectiveness of doing so.

"All we have to do is define our opponent as being a communist or a socialist or somebody who is going to destroy our country," he told reporters at his New Jersey golf club in August 2024 while describing how he planned to defeat his Democratic opponent, then-Vice President Kamala Harris, whom he branded "comrade Kamala" in the presidential election.

Asked to comment on Trump's claims of communist beliefs among Democratic candidates, Kendall Witmer, the Democratic National Committee's rapid response director, said that the president is "grasping at

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straws" ahead of the midterms.

Olivia Wales, a White House spokeswoman, said that "the Democrats' embrace of socialism and communism is an existential threat to our country" and that Trump will "keep calling out their radicalism."

The Communist Party in today's politics

Communist Party USA has a small footprint in current U.S. politics. It brought in about 20,000 members over the past several years and is in the process of assessing how many are active, according to co-chair Joe Sims. He agreed that recent Democratic candidates cannot accurately be described as members of his party.

"I don't know of any of those candidates who are members of the Communist Party or who subscribe to Marxism in the tradition that our party comes from," he said. "Not that it would be a crime if there are such forces, but at this stage, I really don't see it."

Darializa Avila Chevalier, a declared democratic socialist who upset a fifth-term New York City congressman for the Democratic nomination to run in November, is facing scrutiny over deleted social media posts sympathetic to communism and related topics. She said in a statement sent to The Associated Press that she is "proud to be a democratic socialist," and her campaign confirmed that she does not identify as a communist.

Graham Platner won the Maine Democratic primary for U.S. Senate, setting up a high-stakes race against longtime incumbent Republican Sen. Susan Collins. He has similarly faced extensive criticism for old online comments, including one in which he called himself a communist. But he told CNN last October: "I'm not a communist. I'm not a socialist."

Harvey Klehr, an expert on American communism and professor emeritus at Emory University, said it is unlikely that Democrats who gravitate toward ideas associated with communism actually consider themselves members of the Communist Party.

A small number of communist candidates have been elected to local offices in the U.S. But experts say no open members of the Communist Party have won state or federal office.

There is a long history of U.S. politicians calling opponents communist or Marxist without evidence — perhaps most infamously, Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who led efforts to blacklist accused communists in the 1950s. McCarthy's chief counsel during his televised hearings was Roy Cohn, who became Trump's mentor and fixer as he rose to prominence as a real estate mogul in New York.

"I think it's part of the arsenal of the right, which today means the Republican Party, largely, to pull out these accusations of communism, of godless communism," said Maurice Isserman, a professor of American history at Hamilton College and an expert in American communism.

The FBI is directing hundreds of analysts to its probe of Georgia's 2020 presidential election

By KATE BRUMBACK, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The FBI has asked its field offices across the country to dedicate more than 200 staffers to its investigation of the 2020 election in Georgia's Fulton County.

A memo obtained Thursday by The Associated Press calls for the FBI to "surge" 260 investigative analysts and staff operations specialists to the effort, which it described as a "priority investigation."

It said each of them is to conduct a check of an estimated 708 records by July 17. While the memo does not describe the investigation, people familiar with the matter who insisted on anonymity to discuss internal decision-making confirmed the request was to help with the Georgia 2020 election investigation.

FBI agents in January seized hundreds of boxes containing ballots and other documents related to the 2020 election in Georgia's most populous county, which is heavily Democratic and includes most of the city of Atlanta. A Fulton County spokesperson declined to comment citing a pending investigation. The contents of the memo were first reported by MS NOW.

President Donald Trump and his allies have made false claims that widespread election fraud cost him the 2020 election. Georgia's votes in the 2020 presidential race were counted three times, including once

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by hand, and each count affirmed Democrat Joe Biden's win.

The Justice Department has previously said it is investigating "irregularities that occurred during the 2020 presidential election in the County."

The Dow hits a record as most of Wall Street rises, but slumping AI stocks keep indexes mixed

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Most U.S. stocks rose on Thursday, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied to another record, but more drops for computer chip companies and other winners of the artificial-intelligence boom kept indexes mixed.

The S&P 500 finished the day virtually unchanged and edged up by less than 0.1%, even though seven out of every 10 stocks within the index rose. The Dow jumped 594 points, or 1.1%, while the Nasdaq composite dropped 0.8% after erasing an early gain.

Stocks broadly got some help from a report showing that U.S. employers added 57,000 jobs to their payrolls last month. That's growth, which is good for the economy, but it was also short of the 100,000 jobs that economists expected and a slowdown from May's hiring pace.

The bright side of the weaker-than-expected result is that it could keep pressure off inflation, which has been accelerating worldwide because of jumps in oil prices caused by the war with Iran. And now that oil prices are back below where they were before the war, if inflation slows in upcoming months, the Federal Reserve may feel less need to raise interest rates several times this year.

That would be a relief for investors, who tend to love lower interest rates because they can give the economy a boost by making it less expensive for U.S. households and businesses to borrow money and spend. Lower rates also tend to push upward on prices for stocks and other investments.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury got to 4.50% in the morning, up from 3.97% just before the war. But after the release of the U.S. hiring data, it immediately fell back to 4.46% before drifting to 4.48%.

Traders now see an 82% chance that the Fed and its new chairman, Kevin Warsh, will not raise the federal funds rate at its next meeting later this month. That's up from the 71% chance seen a day earlier, according to data from CME Group.

"The labor market isn't overheating," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economic strategist at Annex Wealth Management. He said the data could allow the Fed to wait through the summer to get more clues about how inflation is behaving before having to decide on hiking rates.

On Wall Street, the company behind LaCroix sparkling waters climbed 7.5% after National Beverage said it will pay a special dividend of \$3.25 for each share that investors hold.

Dollar Tree rose 2.4% after the retailer said it approved a program to send up to \$2.5 billion to its shareholders by buying back its stock.

Stocks of companies in the crypto industry were also strong after the price of bitcoin rose roughly 2%, a day after dropping near its lowest level since 2024. Robinhood Markets rose 3.8%, and Coinbase Global gained 3.9%.

But more drops for computer chip companies weighed on indexes. They've come under pressure because of worries that their stock prices shot too high in the frenzy around AI and that all the spending on chips and data centers may not result in as much profit and productivity growth as hoped.

Memory maker Micron Technology erased an early gain to drop 5.5%, a day after plunging 10.6%. Nvidia fell 1.4%, and Lam Research sank 10.2%. They were some of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500 because they've grown so huge in size amid AI mania.

Nvidia has a total value of nearly \$4.7 trillion, for example, which means that its stock's movements have more weight on the S&P 500 than any other.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 0.01 to 7,483.24 points. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied 594.83 to 52,900.07, and the Nasdaq composite sank 207.36 to 25,382.67.

In stock markets abroad, continued drops for chip companies sent indexes sharply lower in several Asian

markets. South Korea's Kospi index sank 7.9% due to losses for companies like SK Hynix. That's its worst drop since a 10% plunge a little more than a week ago.

Indexes also fell 2.5% in Tokyo and 2% in Shanghai.

European indexes were stronger, and France's CAC 40 rallied 1.7%.

In the oil market, prices dropped in the morning but pared their losses as the day progressed. Brent crude, the international standard, settled at \$71.80 per barrel, up 0.3%.

ICE arrests 10,000 in 5 days, a sharp late-June surge in Trump's deportation push

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested 10,000 people over a five-day period at the end of June, marking a major push by the agency tasked with carrying out the Trump administration's mass deportations agenda.

The arrest numbers, obtained from a person familiar with the information who spoke anonymously to discuss data that has not been publicly released, comes after the agency shifted its approach from high-profile arrest sweeps in major American cities to quieter ways to reach President Donald Trump's deportation goals.

The figures indicate that while the administration is no longer cracking down on individual cities, the arrests continue and are surging.

The total number of arrests during the five-day period starting Friday and ending Tuesday translates into roughly 2,000 arrests per day. It was not clear where the arrests had taken place.

The spike in arrests was first reported by The New York Times.

"Since Day One, DHS law enforcement has been delivering on President Trump's promise to the American people to arrest and deport criminal illegal aliens including murderers, rapists, pedophiles, gang members, and terrorists," said the Department of Homeland Security in a statement. "Our message is clear: if you come to our country illegally, we will find you, we will arrest you, and we will deport you."

The arrests news also comes as the number of people entered into ICE detention facilities climbed in June to roughly 39,000 after hovering around 30,000 per month since February, according to information obtained by The Associated Press.

ICE doesn't publicly release arrest data, making exact comparisons with previous periods difficult. But according to data provided to UC Berkeley's Deportation Data Project and analyzed by The Associated Press, 2,000 arrests per day would mark a sharp increase over previous periods.

December had the most ICE arrests since the beginning of the Trump administration, and that month only averaged 1,283 arrests per day nationwide.

In January, at a time when the administration flooded the streets of Minneapolis and surrounding regions with hundreds of immigration enforcement officers, arrests averaged about 1,212 per day across the country.

But Minneapolis proved to be a turning point in the Trump administration's mass deportations agenda after two American citizens were killed by immigration officers while protesting the crackdown in Minneapolis.

Border Czar Tom Homan started drawing down the number of officers in Minnesota as the agency stepped back from the flashy surge operations that had been common during the tenure of then- Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

Operations under Noem headed by former Border Patrol Chief Gregory Bovino were marked by frequent clashes between immigration enforcement officers and protesters, in footage that was often splashed across the Department's social media channels.

In February, immigration arrests fell to 1,057 a day, according to information from the Deportation Data Project. The Project sued through the Freedom of Information Act to obtain the ICE arrests data and it is only current through February.

After Noem was fired, her successor at Homeland Security, Markwayne Mullin, suggested he'd be taking a more low-profile approach to immigration enforcement and he aimed to get the department out of the

headlines. But Mullin was expected to adopt Trump's priorities on immigration.

Alex Ovechkin declares 'I'm back!' and re-signs with Capitals to return for a 22nd NHL season

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

Alex Ovechkin is not ready to skate away from the NHL, not yet, and now he gets a chance to make his career goal-scoring record even more difficult to break.

Ovechkin signed an incentive-laden deal Thursday to return for a 22nd season while also giving the Washington Capitals a chance to build a Stanley Cup contender and its longtime captain the opportunity to add to his jaw-dropping total of 929 goals.

"I'm back!" Ovechkin said.

Ovechkin, who turns 41 on Sept. 17, inked a deal with a \$1 million salary and bonuses worth an additional \$8 million. He receives a \$3.25 million signing bonus and makes the additional \$4.75 million if he plays 10 games, but the contract structure allows him to count just \$4.25 million against the cap. All of that will help the Caps put a team together that could send Ovi out on a high note should this really be it.

After scoring 32 goals at age 40, Ovechkin is 35 clear of now second-place Wayne Gretzky, whose mark of 894 he passed on April 6, 2025, completing the so-called "GR8 Chase" that captivated hockey. He had said in recent months he was waiting until the offseason to decide whether to return or retire from the only NHL team he's ever played for, and management was working on contingency plans either way.

"Thank you to everyone for giving me and my family the time to make this decision," Ovechkin said. "I'm healthy. I love playing hockey and competing to win. I'm excited to come back and join my teammates so we can fight for a playoff spot and have a chance to win."

The Capitals missed the playoffs this spring but qualified 16 times in a stretch of 18 years, which included winning the franchise's only Stanley Cup in 2018 when Ovechkin was playoff MVP.

A teammate for 16-plus seasons, fellow Cup champion John Carlson said he was not surprised by Ovechkin's decision.

"I knew that he was coming back for a long time," Carlson said on a video call with reporters after signing with Tampa Bay. "I'm sure that there was conversations to be had and decisions to be made on his end, too, but it just was always my gut feeling that he wasn't ready to give it up and good for him. He's been an amazing player for far too long in this league, and it's just incredible what he's been able to accomplish. I'm thrilled that he gets to keep living out that dream."

Ovechkin also holds the NHL records for the most power play goals with 331 and game-winning goals with 141. He scored 30 in a season 20 times, joining Hall of Famers Gordie Howe, Johnny Bucyk and Teemu Selanne as the only players to hit that mark at 40 or older.

"What is he, 41, 42, and just incredible that this guy's still finding ways to put up 30-goal seasons," said Brandon Duhaime, who played the past two with Ovechkin in Washington before joining Toronto in free agency. "As a fan of the game, just to be able to watch him and over the past two years, to be able to see him break those records was pretty surreal. Growing up watching him and then being a part of that was absolutely incredible. Obviously wish him nothing but the best this season. Just a really incredible story. Really happy for him and his family."

Ovechkin has been married to his wife, Nastya, since 2017, and the couple has two young children, Sergei and Ilya. They spend their summers in Ovechkin's hometown of Moscow, and the family is expected to settle in Russia once his playing career is over.

That is not yet, which was welcomed by veteran forward Boone Jenner after signing with Washington. Jenner is one of several players the Capitals acquired this offseason, along with Alex Tuch, Jordan Kyrrou and Vincent Desharnais to build around what might be one final run for Ovechkin.

"I always kind of thought he was going to be back," Jenner said. "He's been great for the group. (His return) just adds to what they already have and the other additions that the Caps have made."

Couple charged with felonies for Empire State Building climb-turned-proposal

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A skyscraper-scaling daredevil told police that he and his girlfriend climbed the Empire State Building's antenna and unfurled a banner about love and peace because he wanted to "do something special" for their engagement, prosecutors said Thursday at the couple's arraignment on felony reckless endangerment, burglary and other charges.

The couple, who go by Angela Nikolau and Ivan Beerkus, said little as they left court, though Beerkus responded to a journalist's question about the stunt by saying: "We believe in love."

Authorities said the two — who were the subject of the 2024 Netflix documentary "Skywalkers: A Love Story" about their "rooftopping" exploits and budding romance — created not only a spectacle but a danger by ascending the famed skyscraper's broadcast antenna Wednesday.

After reaching the top, 1,454 feet (443 meters) above midtown Manhattan, the climbers displayed a black banner reading: "When the power of love beats the love of power the world knows peace," news helicopter video showed.

Then they collected the banner and descended to a slightly lower ledge, where an apparently successful marriage proposal unfolded. Nikolau posted images of the escapade on her social media accounts, including a photo that modeled an engagement-style ring above a bird's-eye view of Manhattan.

Police waited about a half-hour for the antenna to be powered down before Emergency Services Unit officers started ascending and eventually intercepted the climbers on their way down, according to the complaint, which noted the danger to officers who climbed about 1,250 feet (381 meters) above the ground. The court document identified the two by their formal names, Angelina Nikolau and Ivan Kuznetsov.

"Skywalkers: A Love Story" follows Beerkus, now 32, and Nikolau, 33, as they make often unauthorized ascents of tall structures, sometimes posing as construction workers to sneak in.

The court complaint said police found a broken lock on a security door on the Empire State Building's restricted-access 104th floor, which provides access to the antenna. The highest public floor is the 102nd, where there's an observation deck. Going higher requires a key card, according to the court complaint.

The Empire State Building's management has called the climb "unauthorized" but hasn't answered questions about what interactions, if any, the daredevils had with security workers. Visitors to the skyscraper are screened and told not to bring large packages, sports equipment, costumes or masks, among other items.

Beerkus and Nikolau were released without bail, in accordance with New York laws that restrict when monetary bail can be set. Their attorney, Jason Krinsky, said outside court that once prosecutors provide evidence, he and his clients would assess it and determine next steps.

"What a way to propose — something you can only dream of," Krinsky said. "So you've got to, you know, give him some credit for that."

Other daredevils have climbed the antenna and other parts of the Empire State Building. Those ascents have largely been unauthorized, but actor and musician Jared Leto was allowed to climb up to the base of the antenna from the 86th floor in 2023 to promote a tour.

Vatican excommunicates schismatic bishops and priests, and warns their followers

By NICOLE WINFIELD and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican responded aggressively Thursday to a traditionalist group that consecrated bishops without the pope's consent, declaring the Society of St. Pius X had formally broken with the Catholic Church. It excommunicated its bishops and priests, and warned its faithful that they too face the harshest sanctions in the church.

By declaring a schism and extending excommunications to potentially thousands of Catholics, the Vatican's doctrine office went above and beyond the minimum sanctions foreseen by the church's canon law

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to respond to the consecrations Wednesday of four new bishops.

The society, known by its acronym SSPX, celebrates the ancient Latin Mass and opposes the modernizing reforms of the Catholic Church, which it considers to be rife with heresies and errors. While a fringe movement on the Catholic right, the SSPX has been a thorn in the Vatican's side for five decades because it claims to be even more Catholic than the Holy See.

During a ritual-filled, five-hour Mass on Wednesday at its seminary in Ecône, Switzerland, the SSPX consecrated four new bishops in direct defiance of Leo, who had urged the group to hold off for the sake of church unity. An estimated 15,500 people and their children attended, a sign that the SSPX has plenty of supporters who came from around the world knowing full well they were defying Rome.

The harshness of the response suggested that after trying to negotiate with the SSPX, the Vatican under Pope Leo XIV had had enough.

Vatican decree targeted bishops and faithful

In a decree, the Vatican excommunicated the four new bishops and the two existing SSPX bishops who participated in the ceremony. It declared the consecrations a "schismatic act" and that the society itself had created a schism, or intentional rupture with the church.

It declared SSPX priests — who number about 750 — to be schismatic, and therefore excommunicated, and invalidated the sacraments of confession and marriage that they administer. The Vatican warned the faithful to stop going to SSPX Masses, decreeing that "those who adhere formally" to the society are schismatic and excommunicated.

The Vatican said that applied to people who are members of the SSPX lay branch and those who "regularly attend" SSPX Masses and formally share its doctrinal positions. The sanctions don't apply to Catholic faithful who attend SSPX Masses "just for liturgical or spiritual reasons" or those who go but accept the pope's authority and teaching.

The SSPX doesn't have an exact count but estimates around 400,000-600,000 people attend its Masses, meaning Thursday's decree could potentially involve the excommunications of thousands of rank-and-file SSPX faithful.

The sanctions, especially those targeting the priests, the faithful and the sacraments they can receive, were particularly harsh and reversed concessions the Vatican had granted the SSPX in recent years as part of its outreach to bring the group back under Rome's wing.

Marc-André Mabillard, media manager for the society, expressed shock at the severity of the sanctions and called them "unjust."

"For us, this excommunication extended to the faithful is brutal. It's not what we expect from a father to whom we refer every day," he told The Associated Press. "We are told, 'You claim to have the truth.' Fine. I'm just saying that we certainly have our flaws, but our main flaw today is having a leader who doesn't want to communicate with us. And that's terrible."

The Vatican's doctrine chief, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, met in February with the SSPX superior, the Rev. Davide Pagliarani, and proposed a dialogue. But Pagliarani asked instead to meet with Leo, who declined but wrote a letter Tuesday begging the SSPX to call off the consecrations.

The group's founders opposed reforms

French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre founded the SSPX in 1970 in opposition to the modernizing reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Among other things, the 1960s meetings known as Vatican II revolutionized the church's relations with other Christians, Jews and people of other faiths and allowed Mass to be celebrated in the vernacular rather than Latin.

Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without papal consent in 1988. The Vatican promptly excommunicated Lefebvre and the four bishops and declared the consecrations a "schismatic act."

Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 lifted the excommunications as part of his yearslong outreach to the group. But the SSPX today has no legal standing in the church and with Thursday's decree is declared to be in schism.

The consecrations had posed a crisis for Leo because the American pope has stressed the need for

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church unity. He has reached out especially to the conservative and traditionalist wing of the church that was in many ways alienated during the Pope Francis pontificate.

The Vatican responded so aggressively in part because the group poses something of a threat by representing a parallel, ultra-Catholic, pre-Vatican II church that has grown in the decades since its original break from Rome. While representing a fraction of the 1.4-billion strong Catholic faithful, the SSPX now has six bishops, 751 priests, 264 seminarians, 145 religious brothers, 88 oblates and 250 religious sisters representing 50 nationalities, according to SSPX statistics.

A key Vatican II document rejected by the SSPX is one that, among other things, deplored antisemitism in every form and repudiated the "deicide" charge that blamed Jews as a people for Christ's death. The Vatican crafted the document as the church reckoned with the role traditional Christian teaching had played in the Holocaust.

The SSPX today says it rejects accusations that it ever taught or practiced antisemitism, and the SSPX distanced itself from one of the original 1988 bishops, the late Bishop Richard Williamson, when he denied the Holocaust.

Traditionalists in communion with Rome respond

In a note accompanying the decree, the Vatican said it was willing, "like a caring mother," to welcome any SSPX faithful back into the fold. It laid out specific procedures for SSPX priests and faithful, by signing two forms professing the faith, promising fidelity to the pope and accepting the core teaching of Vatican II.

While the SSPX is out of communion with Rome, plenty of other Catholic traditionalists who love the Latin Mass remain in communion with the Holy See. They had been watching carefully to see how Leo's Vatican would respond to the SSPX consecrations and were surprised by the harshness of Thursday's sanctions.

"He's brought the hammer down," said Joseph Shaw, head of the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales, which is in communion. Shaw expressed sympathy with the plight of ordinary SSPX faithful, saying the invalidation of marriages especially is going to cause "massive" pastoral problems. "It's a sad day."

Luigi Casalini, of the blog *Messa in Latino*, meaning Latin Mass, said the excommunication of the bishops was correct because canon law provides for it. But the extension of the excommunications to SSPX priests and faithful was "an act of unusual severity," he said, while saying the invalidation of SSPX sacraments was problematic.

One of the thousands of worshippers at Wednesday's consecrations was Allison Isermann, a 24-year-old from St. Marys, Kansas, a small town with a large SSPX church. She grew up as a society member and strongly defended its teaching in opposition to Vatican II, specifically its openness to those of other faiths.

"It is actually very anti-Catholic and anti-charitable to affirm others and their beliefs when it is our duty and our mission to actually convert and sanctify the world and to restore all things in Christ," she said.

US employers still reluctant to add many jobs as hiring slows in June

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers slowed hiring last month and added only 57,000 jobs, less than half the previous month's total and a sign companies still have a cautious economic outlook.

The Labor Department said Thursday that the unemployment rate declined to a low 4.2% from 4.3% in May, though the drop mostly occurred because many people out of work gave up looking and were no longer counted as unemployed.

The figures suggest businesses remain wary of the economy's health, with inflation at a three-year high and consumer confidence near post-pandemic lows. The job market has been stuck in a "low-hire, low-fire" rut in which the employed enjoy some job security with layoffs low, but those out of work are struggling to get hired. Strong hiring in the spring raised hopes the economy was escaping that dynamic, but Thursday's report suggests job gains are still muted.

"We are in a market that is still very fragile, and still susceptible to shocks happening," Nicole Bachaud, labor economist at ZipRecruiter, an online job platform, said. "There is still a lot of hesitation on the part

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of employers and workers themselves to make any moves." She noted that other government data shows companies are posting more jobs but not filling them.

Hiring has improved from last year, when employers added fewer than 10,000 jobs a month, on average. In this year's first half the pace improved to 92,000. Yet healthy job gains that were initially reported in April and May were revised lower, from 172,000 down to 129,000 in May and from 179,000 to 148,000 in April.

Restaurants and bars cut jobs last month, despite the World Cup

Restaurants, bars, and hotels cut 61,000 jobs, a sharp disappointment for those who expected the World Cup tournament that is taking place in multiple U.S. cities would lead to at least temporary job gains. Retailers also shed 7,500 jobs.

Chad Moutray, chief economist at the National Restaurant Association, said member companies are seeing signs consumers are pulling back on eating out, particularly outside higher-income households. It reflects a "K-shaped" economy, where wealthier households pull ahead of middle- and lower-income ones.

"We continue to hear that a lot of Americans are struggling to make ends meet," he said. "If you're catering to the upper-end of the K, you're doing fine. If you're catering to the lower part of the K, you're seeing some challenges in the last couple of months."

Moutray's group has forecast that restaurants will hire 450,000 seasonal workers this summer, slightly below last year's 470,000.

Denise Beckson, a vice president at Morey's Piers and Beachfront Water Parks in Wildwood, New Jersey, said her company has hired about 1,500 summer employees this year, roughly the same as last year. But she said many restaurants and hotels are struggling with higher food costs and minimum wage increases that have limited their ability to hire.

"Costs continue to rise, and one way to control that is to pull back on staffing," she said.

Many Americans worry about the impact of artificial intelligence on employment, but for now AI may actually be adding jobs. Last month professional and business services, a category that includes architecture, engineering, and software development — occupations expected to be vulnerable to AI — added 36,000 jobs.

Construction firms added workers, possibly because of AI buildout

Blue-collar industries added a modest number of jobs, with manufacturers adding 3,000 positions and construction firms 11,000.

Scottsville, New York-based Power & Construction Group added some of those jobs as it seeks to keep up with the demand for greater electrical capacity in the state. Thomas "Murph" Murphy, the company's vice president, said they are looking to hire another 15-20 workers after adding 47 in the past two months.

The company is seeking more electricians, laborers, and heavy equipment operators to join the 350 workers on staff, Murphy said.

Murphy said his company is competing for workers with firms building data centers in other states -- not many are being built in New York -- and he has to work to convince young people to choose construction as a career. The firm recently built a training center to bring newer, younger workers up to speed.

"The grid can't handle all the new power that everybody's using," Murphy said, noting the increase in laptops, phones, and tablets in many Americans' homes. "We need to continuously build the grid. But it does take time."

Jobs data could keep Federal Reserve on sidelines

Thursday's report suggests that hiring and wage gains aren't accelerating enough to worsen inflationary pressures in the economy, which could allow the Federal Reserve to keep its key rate unchanged at its current level of about 3.6%.

Previously, many Wall Street investors had expected the central bank to lift its key rate this year as hiring appeared to be accelerating. The prospect of no rate cuts lifted the stock market in mid-morning trading, with the broad S&P 500 index up 0.7%.

"Today's data hit the sweet spot for markets — strong enough to keep worries about growth at bay, but soft enough to reduce the probability of a rate hike," said Eric Winograd, chief U.S. economist at AB Global, an asset management firm.

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Fed chair Kevin Warsh in Portugal Wednesday reiterated that he would push inflation back to the Fed's 2% target, though he wouldn't comment on whether the Fed would raise rates at its next meeting, later this month.

Average paychecks, meanwhile, rose 3.5% from a year ago, a decent gain but one that still trailed inflation, leaving many Americans struggling to keep up with rising costs for necessities such as food, gas, and housing.

Historically, a job gain of just 57,000 would be seen as weak. Yet as more Americans retire and new immigration has dropped sharply, the U.S. workforce has shrunk in the past year. As a result, even gains at that level are enough to keep the unemployment rate unchanged over time.

Fewer Americans are working or seeking work

Last month, in fact, the workforce declined sharply, with the percentage of Americans working or looking for jobs falling to 61.5%, down from 61.8% in May. It's the lowest level in five years.

Much of the decline reflected the aging of the population, as more than 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day and many retire. Yet the proportion of Americans aged 25 through 54 who are working or searching for jobs also fell last month.

Goal of higher voter turnout remains elusive in California as changes have extended ballot counting

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California is finally nearing the end of the ballot counting from its June 2 primary, a tediously slow process that is largely the result of multiple changes over the years intended to boost turnout by making voting easier and more accessible.

State data and experts who study voting trends suggest those efforts have made no significant improvement in participation, even as California's drawn-out tabulating has put it in the crosshairs of President Donald Trump and made it a target of those who promote unfounded election conspiracy theories.

Turnout hit 40.8% in the June primary, according to preliminary figures from the secretary of state's office, with counties required to complete their counting by Thursday. While that was an increase over the previous two primary elections, it was below participation levels in several other primaries stretching back to 2000 and nowhere near participation in the 1970s, when primary turnout sometimes topped 70%.

Wide gaps also remain in participation by younger voters and voters of color, according to the Center for Inclusive Democracy, a nonpartisan research group. The state's most consistent voters remain older, white, more affluent homeowners.

The state appears to have seen only incremental progress from its voting changes over the past decade or more, said the center's director, Mindy Romero.

"We haven't seen significant jumps in turnout," she said. "We still have very significant disparity in turnout with race and ethnicity. The numbers don't lie."

Extensive changes have mostly led to longer vote counting

Over the years, heavily Democratic California has ushered in a series of changes aimed at driving up voter participation. Those changes have sometimes come with a price, lengthening the time it takes to count ballots.

Every voter receives a mail-in ballot that can arrive at an election office seven days late and still be counted, provided the envelope is postmarked by Election Day. Residents also can sign up to vote on Election Day if they missed the registration deadline or had not updated their voter registration information. Those ballots are counted once their registration is verified.

Each envelope containing a mail ballot must match the signature on file, and that takes time. If a signature does not match, election officials are required to give those voters a chance to come in and prove their identity so the ballot will count, further delaying a final tally.

In that sense, California's unusually long vote tally is the result of its own doing. In a report released last

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month, the nonpartisan California Voter Foundation found that the percentage of California's ballots counted within two days of Election Day has generally declined over time, from 81% in 2004 to 66% in 2024.

That period loosely tracked a steady expansion of mail voting in the state. In a special statewide election last year, nearly 9 of every 10 voters used a mail ballot.

Florida, Texas and other big states quickly wrap up vote counting. California is a national laggard, with the outcome in close races sometimes taking weeks to decide.

While election officials insist they are focused on accuracy, the extended tabulating period has opened the door for candidates who see their lead slip away to suggest something nefarious is at work. After the June primary, Trump seized on California's reputation as the national slowpoke in vote counting to renew his long-standing criticism of the state's elections, while the Republican's Department of Justice launched an investigation into Los Angeles County's elections.

Even Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom's office has lamented the glacial pace of counting. The state's newly enacted budget includes \$29 million to help speed up the state's long count.

"We wish the votes were counted faster, too," Newsom's press office wrote on the social platform X last month.

Turnout hardly budged after California passed a major participation law

One of the most prominent changes came in 2016, with the passage of what was called the Voter's Choice Act. It was intended to make voting more convenient and increase turnout, especially among younger voters of color.

The law set a path toward statewide vote-by-mail and, in some counties, replaced traditional neighborhood polling places with community voting centers and ballot drop boxes. The goal was to free voters from being tied to a single polling location or day.

It does not appear the law has had the intended impact.

Elections two decades apart give a stark illustration: Turnout for the 2024 presidential election in California was 71%, 5 percentage points lower than turnout for the 2004 presidential election. The 2022 midterms turnout was 51%, the same rate as the midterm election 20 years earlier.

A 2025 study by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California concluded that "turnout did not consistently improve or worsen for any racial or ethnic group."

"The effects of the (act) have generally fallen short of the reform's original goal of a larger and more representative electorate," the study said.

In separate 2025 research, the institute found that whites make up 36% of California's adult population but comprise 50% of the state's likely voters. Latinos make up 38% of the adult population but 29% of likely voters. Black residents make up 5% of adults and 4% of likely voters.

"You can't definitely, clearly say the (act) had an overall, positive impact on turnout," said Romero, the voting researcher, who added that more study was needed.

Legislative changes can go only so far to boost turnout

There appears to be an emerging consensus that more needs to be done to connect with and motivate infrequent voters, many of them people of color who are often overlooked by campaigns.

U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, a Democrat who was the state's chief elections officer when the Voter's Choice Act was signed by Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown, said in a statement that while the state is a leader in voting access "candidates and political parties must do more to motivate voters to get out and vote."

Kim Alexander, president of the California Voter Foundation, said part of California's challenge is simply contending with the scale of voting. California has 23 million-plus registered voters, more than any other state. That number has increased steadily over two decades, even as turnout has not jumped significantly.

The state has at least made gains registering new voters — nearly 85% of eligible voters are registered, compared with 70% two decades ago. That also means more votes to count, another challenge to the timeliness of results. The state has about 7.5 million more voters than it did in 2006.

Alexander said a voter's decision to turn in a ballot can turn on multiple considerations. Primary elections can be seen as optional, with the general election coming in the fall. Misinformation and attacks on the

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reliability of elections are suppressing turnout. Even California's notoriously complex ballots with dozens of races overlapping with state and local ballot initiatives can be a turnoff, she said, overwhelming some would-be voters.

Despite all the state's changes, how people vote can be less important than what motivates them to vote. "The public's level of trust in government and institutions, who and what's on the ballot and how well-financed their get-out-the-vote campaigns are, have a much greater impact on voter participation than the election model used," said Bob Page, Orange County's registrar of voters.

What polling shows about Americans' interest in the World Cup and USMNT

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — This World Cup has given U.S. soccer fans plenty to cheer about — even if a new survey shows most Americans are still on the sidelines.

New polling from Ipsos Sports, provided exclusively to The Associated Press, shows that the World Cup has excited soccer fans and piqued many Americans' interest, even as the sport faces an uphill climb to reach mainstream popularity in the United States.

Despite that challenge, many U.S. adults were excited about the United States making it to the knockout round of the World Cup. Most soccer fans in the U.S. have been pleased by the U.S. men's national team performance, and the overwhelming majority are excited for the rest of the World Cup.

The poll was conducted June 26-28, after the United States advanced from the group stage but before they won against Bosnia-Herzegovina in the first knockout round.

Soccer fans are excited by the USMNT's performance

About 6 in 10 soccer fans were "extremely" or "very" excited about the U.S. advancing to the knockout round, much higher than the 25% of Americans overall who said the same.

The United States has historically lost once they reached the knockout rounds. Before Wednesday, they had last won a knockout game in 2002.

Though this poll was conducted before the United States' victory against Bosnia-Herzegovina, fans were already giving the U.S. men's team credit for having a strong showing in the group stage. Most soccer fans, 55%, said the U.S. team's performance was going "extremely well" or "very well." One-quarter, roughly, believed it was going "somewhat well."

Similarly, about half of soccer fans say the United States' role in co-hosting the World Cup is going at least "very" well.

There's less enthusiasm for FIFA's role in managing the World Cup. Only about one-third of soccer fans in the U.S. say that's going "extremely" or "very" well. During the tournament, FIFA has faced criticism for enforcing mandated hydration breaks that some say ruin the momentum of games, as well as cooperating with travel restrictions and visa refusals against Iran.

The poll found Americans and soccer fans alike are about evenly split on whether they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of FIFA. About 2 in 10 U.S. adults have a positive view of FIFA, while 25% have a negative one. Most Americans — 55% — don't have an opinion.

Will this be the moment Americans turn to soccer? Probably not

It's not easy to get Americans to care about soccer, even with the World Cup in their backyard.

Only about 2 in 10 Americans consider themselves fans of international or U.S. soccer, far behind the share who root for professional football, basketball or baseball. And roughly one-third of U.S. adults say they have heard or read "a lot" about the World Cup, though most have heard at least "a little."

Roughly 2 in 10 U.S. adults — 17% — say they are "extremely" or "very" excited about the rest of the World Cup. That's up a smidge from Ipsos polling in May, but points to the challenge that comes with trying to turn America into a soccer nation.

Most Americans expect that the World Cup will increase other Americans' interest in soccer, but relatively few say they have personally gotten more interested in the sport. About 6 in 10 U.S. adults think Ameri-

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cans in general will get more into soccer because of the World Cup, while 24% say they personally have.

Soccer fans are especially optimistic, though. About three-quarters of soccer fans in the U.S. expect this year's World Cup will increase Americans' general interest in soccer, compared to about half of non-soccer fans. And roughly half of soccer fans say the World Cup has increased their own interest in the sport, even if only 17% of non-fans say the same.

Many Americans will watch games or follow on social media

Outside of watching games, there are other ways for people to engage with the World Cup.

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults — including about half of soccer fans — say they have used social media to keep up with teams and players.

Roughly one-quarter of Americans have gone to a restaurant or bar to watch a game or plan to do so, and about 2 in 10 have gone to a World Cup watch party. About 2 in 10 U.S. adults — and 33% of soccer fans in the U.S. — say they have bought official merchandise like team jerseys, posters or scarves.

As sportsbooks note how World Cup betting has exceeded expectations amid the USMNT's success, about 1 in 10 Americans in the poll say they have placed an official bet on the games. About 5% say they have traded on game outcomes using a prediction market.

And with official and unofficial watch parties popping up in host cities across the United States, 8% say they have watched a game from a host city.

Fire shelters are a key defense for firefighters. But they don't guarantee survival

By JACK DURA Associated Press

Five firefighters battling a fast-moving wildfire in Colorado were forced to deploy their fire shelters when they couldn't escape the flames. Three of them were overcome and died, while two were injured and hospitalized.

Fire shelters are mandatory equipment for crews who work across rugged terrain where things can change at a moment's notice, especially when extremely dry and windy weather drives the flames, as happened last Saturday.

Fire shelters have saved hundreds of lives over the years, but officials caution that the equipment doesn't guarantee protection in every scenario. Instead, the focus is on having well-defined escape and safety zones.

"Ideally they're trying to escape and avoid that entrapment," said Shawn Steber with the U.S. Forest Service's National Technology and Development Program in Montana. "But if it comes down to it and it's their last kind of thing they can bring out for their protection, then yes, in that sense it is kind of that last line of defense."

Fire shelters are made of multiple layers

Crafted from aluminum foil, silica fabric and fiberglass, fire shelters are designed to protect users from the intense heat of flames and to trap breathable air inside as a fire passes. Inhaling hot gases from a fire can damage the airway and lungs.

The ability of a fire shelter to withstand heat depends on how long its materials are exposed to heat and other factors, Steber said.

The one-time-use shelters have been improved occasionally. A recent change made the shelters stand up better when deployed, said John Montrastelle, a sales manager with Anchor Industries, a maker of fire shelters.

"Whenever there's an incident, a loss of life, there's more discussion and more talk about a better shelter, a better fire shelter, something that will protect the firefighter in higher temperatures," he said.

Other modifications include a one-piece floor, improved hold-down handles and reduced bulk, Steber said.

Fire shelters weigh around 6 pounds and are folded up inside several protective layers in a firefighter's pack. Moisture, sand, debris and rough use can damage them.

Using a shelter takes training

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Wildland firefighters have been required to carry fire shelters for decades. Training typically occurs once a year, often during a hike or while practicing digging a fire line. It's also part of training for cadets hired by local firefighting agencies.

Firefighters are trained to set up their shelters within 30 seconds or less and as early as possible when needed, Steber said.

"We try to teach people 'within 30 seconds or less,' but also at the same time, 'deploy as early as possible,'" Steber said.

The nature of the fire determines how long a shelter user stays inside, whether the fire flashes over them or stays put, Montrastelle said. They can also be used in the event of a freak storm that might drop hail or snow.

When considering escape, guidance shared by national experts reminds firefighters that they can hold their breath for only about 15 seconds while running through flames or superheated air and need to get on the ground before the flames arrive.

A fire shelter is deployed by removing it from the bag or casing protecting it, shaking it to expand it outward, climbing inside and holding it down with your arms, knees and feet to keep out flames and hot air.

"No matter how bad it gets inside, it is usually much worse outside," the guidance states. "If you panic and leave the shelter, one breath of hot, toxic gases could damage your lungs. Suffocation may follow."

Shelter use is rare

From 2021 to 2025, four shelter deployments occurred, including two last year and none in 2022 or 2023, according to statistics available from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. In 2020, 30 deployments occurred, almost all in California.

The recent lower numbers are likely due to a variety of factors, including the nature of fire seasons, including the number of large fires requiring the use of fire shelters, Steber said.

In 2013, 19 firefighters died in the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona. Firefighters were deploying their shelters when flames overtook them in a steep canyon. It was nearly a decade earlier that 14 firefighters perished in the South Canyon Fire in Colorado.

Other firefighters have survived in shelters. During the 2015 Twisp Fire in Washington, two crew members used shelters, but three others died in a truck.

A full investigation lasting months will unfold into the circumstances around the three firefighters' deaths last weekend.

Montrastelle said he hopes studies of the tragedy will result in teachable information for what fire crews should look for when fighting a fire.

"It's a combination of events that led to somebody deploying, because they're split-second decisions that are being made," he said.

Russia lands heavy strikes on Ukraine's capital, killing at least 21

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia hammered Kyiv in an 11-hour drone and missile attack overnight into Thursday morning, killing at least 21 civilians in the city and injuring scores more in what Moscow said was retaliation for Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil facilities.

Loud explosions shook the Ukrainian capital, where more than 50,000 people sheltered in subway stations after authorities issued air raid warnings, the Kyiv Metro said. Emergency crews dug through the rubble of collapsed and charred apartment buildings all day in search of victims.

Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement that the bombardment was in response to Ukraine's recent barrage of long-range strikes, which have caused severe fuel shortages and put pressure on President Vladimir Putin.

Ukraine's frequent attacks inside Russia — described by Zelenskyy as a 40-day blitz — have especially targeted oil refineries, causing a fuel crisis that has frustrated Russians already feeling the war's economic toll.

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More than four years after Moscow's full-scale invasion of its neighbor, Ukraine's technological advances in drone engineering have in recent months given it an edge, analysts and Western officials say. Its strikes on supply routes behind the front line have robbed the Russian army of momentum on the battlefield and made its progress slow and costly, they say.

Kyiv's forces have especially targeted supplies to Crimea, triggering the worst fuel crisis on the Black Sea peninsula since it was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014 and delivering a blow to the Kremlin's narrative that Moscow is winning the war.

Ukrainian officials say they are trying to force Putin to the negotiating table, but so far Moscow's response has been to hit back.

Diplomatic efforts to end the war, most recently by the Trump administration, haven't produced results. President Donald Trump and Zelenskyy are expected to attend next week's NATO summit in Turkey.

Putin thinks that time is on his side, that Western support will peter out and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually collapse under pressure from strategic bombing, analysts say.

Ukraine's top diplomat says it was a 'night of horror' in Kyiv

The attack killed 21 people in Kyiv, according to the country's Emergency Service. More than 90 others were reported injured.

Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said it was a "night of horror" in the capital, which had a pre-war population of roughly 3 million people.

Flashes from exploding drones and missiles lit up the night, and loud booms echoed through Kyiv. Tracers from air defense fire streaked through the air as a huge pall of black smoke rose into the sky.

More than 30 locations across the city reported damage, including about 20 residential buildings, authorities said.

Kyiv resident Serhii Budko said three or four ballistic missiles hit his district of the city. "We were inside the shelter and felt the shelter shaking — the ceiling and floor, everything," the 24-year-old said.

In Kyiv's Desnianskyi district, residents were trapped inside a damaged nine-story building, and in the Darnytskyi district, most of a nine-story building collapsed.

In Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region, meanwhile, a Russian strike killed a 7-year-old girl and wounded four other people, including an 11-year-old girl, all members of the same family, regional head Oleksandr Hanzha said.

The bombardment was "exclusively against military or military-linked targets," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

Russia's aerial attacks on Ukraine have repeatedly hit civilian areas. More than 16,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed in the war, according to the United Nations.

No reliable figures are available for battlefield casualties in the war. A report earlier this year by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank, estimated that up to 1.8 million soldiers have been killed, wounded or gone missing on both sides, with Russian troops accounting for most of that number.

Ukrainian officials urge countries to provide more air defenses

The attack used "high-precision long-range weapons" and drones to strike weapons factories and energy facilities in and around Kyiv, and "military airfield infrastructure" in other parts of Ukraine, the Russian Defense Ministry's statement said.

In all, Russia fired 74 missiles and 496 drones in the attack, Ukraine's air force said.

Ukraine's air defenses have improved throughout the war, especially in countering Russian drones. But it is harder to stop ballistic missiles, which accounted for roughly a third of the missiles fired overnight.

Sybiha, the Ukrainian foreign minister, said in April that the country's weapons factories meet up to 75% of its military's needs. But he and other Ukrainian officials have pleaded with partner countries to supply more Patriot systems that offer the best protection from Russian aerial attacks.

Ukraine attacks another Russian oil refinery

Ukrainian forces struck one of Russia's largest oil refineries overnight in the Nizhny Novgorod region east of Moscow, starting a fire, Ukraine's General Staff said.

Also, Ukrainian forces struck a railway bridge over the Siverskyi Donets River in the Russian-occupied

Luhansk region, it said. The bridge was used by Russian forces to transport personnel, weapons and military supplies, according to the General Staff.

The Declaration's forgotten (non)signer: John Dickinson's missing 1776 signature haunts his legacy

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For a quarter century, Jane Calvert has been on a mission shared by few scholars of the Revolutionary War era. She has championed a founder mostly remembered, when remembered at all, as the man who wouldn't sign the Declaration of Independence — the lawyer and statesman John Dickinson.

"It has been a constant struggle," says Calvert, a former associate professor at the University of Kentucky who has written often about Dickinson and is the founder of the John Dickinson Writings Project, which aims to make his works widely available.

For much of the country, the 250th anniversary of independence on Saturday is a time for celebrating and debating the country's birth. But for Calvert and others, it's also a moment to challenge the lingering image of a man who at times has been ignored, ridiculed or literally cast aside.

He was the Revolution's 'penman'

Dickinson, a Maryland native who spent much of his life in Delaware and Pennsylvania, was once regarded as among the most important and inspiring founders. His "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania," a dozen missives published in the 1760s, were widely read attacks against Britain's right to tax the colonies that helped give Americans a shared sense of identity and purpose. He even wrote the words to one of the country's first patriotic anthems, "The Liberty Song."

Admirers would call him the "Penman of the Revolution."

But Dickinson also sought peace with Britain well after the first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord. In July 1775, he helped compose the Olive Branch Petition, a call for reconciliation that King George III essentially ignored. When the Continental Congress voted for independence in July 1776, Dickinson and fellow Pennsylvanian Robert Morris abstained. While Morris later signed the Declaration, Dickinson withheld his name.

"He wasn't opposed to independence per se, but he thought it should happen gradually and without bloodshed," Calvert says.

"America wasn't prepared in any sense, including militarily, and there was no constitution, no foreign allies, and no domestic manufacturing. Neither was there was unanimity on the independence question," Calvert adds. "But as critical as all these things were, Dickinson's main concern was that there were no legal protections for the most vulnerable Americans. He was most worried about religious dissenters, particularly the Quakers in Pennsylvania."

History downgraded him

Dickinson's reputation as a man more of words than of action has long outlasted him.

At the Signers' Hall exhibit in Philadelphia's National Constitution Center, the Dickinson statue is placed apart in a corner, sculpted in a contemplative pose. Popular storytellers of the American Revolution, whether documentary maker Ken Burns or "Hamilton" playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda, tend to leave Dickinson out of the narrative. He is otherwise a smug Anglophile in the musical "1776," and, in the 2008 HBO miniseries about John Adams, he is portrayed as the compromising foil to Adams' militant righteousness.

"It's pretty egregious," Calvert says. "He is depicted as a scowling and sunken-eyed naysayer of the Patriot cause. We know that he was a compelling and charismatic figure, well-liked among his colleagues and seen as a devoted Patriot leader. He did not wear a wig, don fancy clothes, walk with a cane or speak with a Scottish brogue — all things added in the show to make him appear aristocratic."

Once independence was declared, Dickinson did not retire from public life or side with the British, but served in the Pennsylvania and Delaware militias. He helped draft the June 1776 Articles of Confederation, supported the U.S. Constitution as a Delaware delegate and served as the president of Delaware and of

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Pennsylvania. Dickinson and his wife, Mary, were the namesakes for the first college — based in Carlisle, Pennsylvania — chartered after the founding of the United States. When he died, in 1808, then-President Thomas Jefferson called him “one of the great worthies of the revolution.”

Praising his contributions both before and after independence, Calvert believes Dickinson should be placed alongside Adams, Jefferson and others among the elite of founders. Thomas Donnelly, lead scholar at the Constitution Center, is among those who say Calvert has broadened his understanding of Dickinson (he speculates that the center’s Dickinson statue was meant as a tribute to his “scholarly nature”).

Some historians see it differently. Joseph Ellis, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of “Founding Brothers,” credits Dickinson as the leading voice of resistance in the decade leading up to 1776 but laments his decision not “to take the last step.” Fellow Pulitzer winner Jack Rakove says that Dickinson’s thinking in 1776 was a “quirk of his conscientious political personality” that shouldn’t diminish his other achievements.

But he still wouldn’t rank him in the first tier. Instead, he places Dickinson just below, alongside such figures as Benjamin Rush and John Jay. Says Rakove: “Perhaps his qualms of conscience in 1776 have affected his reputation.”

Thank you, ‘South Park’

Dickinson himself would lament that his opposition to the Declaration was a “finishing blow” to his “diminished popularity.”

Adams was among his detractors, dismissing him as a “piddling genius whose fame has been trumpeted so loudly.” In the 1840s, Calvert says, historian George Bancroft helped seal Dickinson’s legacy by condemning him for how he “dulled the resentment of the people, and paralyzed the manly impulse of self-sacrificing courage.”

Calvert has not been alone in defending Dickinson. His other advocates range from the late conservative commentator William Murchison, author of a 2013 biography that cites Calvert’s research, to such historians-Dickinson Project editors as Ian Iverson and Nathan R. Kozuskanich. Calvert even praises the creators of “South Park” for an episode aired in 2003, during the Iraq War. As supporters and protesters clash, Cartman travels back to 1776, witnesses the independence debate and finds parallels to the present.

“It’s the only pop culture representation of Dickinson I’ve seen that portrays him as being motivated by principle — that we shouldn’t found a country based on war,” Calvert says.

“Here Dickinson is the forefather of those antiwar protesters,” Calvert says. “Whether he would have gone so far as to say that the reasons for the Revolution were trumped up, I don’t know. Maybe. In any case, there is a lot to like!”

The Supreme Court tackled race, history and the law in fraught and reflective major rulings

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court just wrapped up a term that yielded significant rulings in cases involving race and discrimination that could have lasting effects on U.S. politics and society.

Justices were at times bitterly divided — and critical of one another — in rulings that winnowed key provisions of a landmark voting rights law, allowed the government to revoke protections for some immigrants and even challenged the historic understanding of birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants.

The decisions come at a moment when long-standing debates over race and identity have turned toward immigration, increasing racial diversity and the fairness of policies meant to prevent and redress discrimination.

“This term, we saw a Supreme Court that is moving quickly to eradicate legal protections in ways that will leave vulnerable communities exposed to the harsh winds of discrimination and hatred that we continue to see across the country today,” Kristen Clarke, general counsel for the NAACP and the former head of the Justice Department’s civil rights division during the Biden administration, told The Associated Press.

Here is a breakdown of the latest decisions involving race and what they may mean going forward:

The temporary protected status case

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The court allowed the government to end deportation protections for Haitians and Syrians in the U.S. who have fled violence and natural disaster. President Donald Trump's administration revoked the temporary protected status last year.

With the president's more than decadelong track record of denigrating developing nations and immigrants who come to the U.S. from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, attorneys for some affected migrants contended that the government could not cancel the designations, in part because Trump's comments about immigrants were racist.

"The true reason for the termination is the president's racial animus towards non-white immigrants and bare dislike of Haitians in particular," Geoffrey Pipoly, an attorney for the Haitian nationals in the case, said during April oral arguments in the case, *Mullin v. Doe*. The attorneys noted that, during his second presidential campaign, Trump claimed immigrants "are poisoning the blood of our country" and suggested in another instance that migrants have "bad genes."

Federal authorities denied prejudice played a role in the decision and argued that TPS was supposed to end but has lasted more than a decade in some cases.

In writing for the 6-3 conservative majority, Justice Samuel Alito said none of the cited statements was "overtly racial," reasoning that any of Trump's actions could have been taken without racial animus and attributing his anti-immigrant comments to "political discourse."

That's not how the court's liberal minority saw the situation.

"The references — of filth, disease, and primitiveness — are shot through with racial stereotypes and tropes. It is hard to imagine the statements being made today of any White community," Justice Elena Kagan wrote in her dissent.

The birthright citizenship case

In one of the highest-profile cases of the term, the court reaffirmed that the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution means all people born in the U.S. are citizens.

On his first day in office last year, Trump signed an executive order seeking to restrict birthright citizenship to the children of U.S. citizens, a move that civil rights groups challenged as unconstitutional and racist.

In his majority opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts traced the arc of birthright citizenship — a principle that all people born on U.S. soil are citizens — from its origins in English common law to its codification in the 14th Amendment.

Roberts noted that race and citizenship had been fiercely debated in courts, speeches, Congress and battlefields because of Black Americans' fight for freedom from slavery.

Freed Black Americans did not receive citizenship as a "reward," Roberts wrote, but because "the Amendment recognized their rightful claim to birthright citizenship simply and solely by virtue of their having been born on American soil."

The 6-3 ruling was a blow to the Trump administration, which has made restricting immigration its central goal.

"The clause does not extend citizenship to the children of temporary visa holders or illegal aliens," U.S. Solicitor General John Sauer argued before the court in April.

Justice Clarence Thomas agreed and wrote in his dissent that African descendants of enslaved people in the U.S. are a unique case separate from the children of tourists or people in the country illegally.

"Blacks were entitled to citizenship because they were Americans. They had no other homeland, owed no allegiance to any foreign power, and were subject to no other authority," Thomas wrote.

In a stark move, liberal Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson and Sonia Sotomayor directly criticized Thomas' claim in a joint opinion.

"The Reconstruction Amendments were an anticaste, antisubordination reset for the Nation, not a mere spot treatment for the dark stain of slavery," they wrote.

The voting rights case

The Supreme Court handed down a decision in April that gutted a key provision of the Voting Rights Act meant to remedy efforts to disenfranchise minority voters. Among the methods the law permitted to stop voting discrimination in states was the creation of majority-minority congressional districts.

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In the majority opinion, Alito found that because race and partisan voting behavior were so intertwined, it was unfair to conclude that a partisan gerrymander of a state's congressional districts could be racist, given there may be other reasons for the map's results.

Alito reasoned that "in a state where both parties have substantial support and where race is often correlated with party preference," partisan actors can "easily exploit" laws meant to protect minority political participation for disingenuous reasons.

The liberal justices balked at the logic and criticized the conservative majority for harming minority representation in politics and culture. They believed that the law's provisions were still necessary to prevent discrimination by states and worried about the fallout from its removal.

"The consequences are likely to be far-reaching and grave," Kagan wrote in her dissent. "Today's decision renders Section 2 all but a dead letter. In the states where that law continues to matter — the states still marked by residential segregation and racially polarized voting — minority voters can now be cracked out of the electoral process."

The decision has had profound impact on the political landscape, with nearly a dozen Southern states immediately taking steps to redistrict and eliminate majority-Black districts.

Today in History: July 3, Union wins Battle of Gettysburg

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 3, the 184th day of 2026. There are 181 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 3, 1863, the Civil War Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania ended in a major victory for the North as Confederate troops failed to breach Union positions during an assault known as Pickett's Charge.

Also on this date:

In 1775, Gen. George Washington took command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In 1944, during World War II, Soviet forces recaptured Minsk from the Germans.

In 1950, the first carrier strikes of the Korean War took place as the USS Valley Forge and the HMS Triumph sent fighter planes against North Korean targets.

In 1971, singer Jim Morrison of The Doors died in Paris at age 27.

In 1979, Dan White, convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the shooting deaths of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone (mahs-KOH'-nee) and Supervisor Harvey Milk, was sentenced to seven years and eight months in prison.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan presided over a gala ceremony in New York Harbor that saw the re-lighting of the renovated Statue of Liberty.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air jetliner over the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 people aboard.

In 2011, Novak Djokovic (NOH'-vak JOH'-kuh-vich) won his first Wimbledon, beating defending champion Rafael Nadal.

In 2012, Andy Griffith who made homespun American Southern wisdom his trademark as the wise sheriff in "The Andy Griffith Show," died at his North Carolina home. He was 86.

In 2015, Andre Borschberg landed his solar-powered aircraft in Hawaii after a 4,000-mile (6,400-kilometer) flight of nearly 118 hours from Japan, claiming the longest nonstop flight harnessing the sun's energy. The Solar Impulse 2 had 17,000 solar cells spanning wings wider than a Boeing 747's.

In 2022, a man opened fire at a mall near Copenhagen in Denmark, killing three people, believing the victims were zombies. Twenty-three other people were injured in the attack and the rush to flee; the man, who was not identified during the trial because of court rules, was later convicted of murder and other charges and sentenced to a secure medical facility.

Today's Birthdays: Attorney Gloria Allred is 85. Actor Kurtwood Smith is 83. Country singer Johnny Lee is 80. Humorist Dave Barry is 79. Actor Betty Buckley is 79. Talk show host Montel Williams is 70. Country singer Aaron Tippin is 68. Rock musician Vince Clarke (Depeche Mode, Yaz, Erasure) is 66. Actor Tom Cruise

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is 64. Actor Connie Nielsen is 61. Actor Yeardley Smith is 62. Actor-singer Audra McDonald is 56. Hockey Hall of Famer Teemu Selanne is 56. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is 55. Actor Patrick Wilson is 53. Former mixed martial artist Wanderlei Silva is 50. Actor Olivia Munn is 46. Formula One driver Sebastian Vettel is 39. Rock singer-songwriter Elle King is 37. Actor Mia McKenna-Bruce is 29. Actor Sara Waisglass is 28. Dancer and actor Corinne Joy is 19.