

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, July 10

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combo, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Groton Legion at Rotary Tournament in Clark

Groton 14U Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

Olive Grove: Men's 4 Man Hdcp 1 PM

Saturday, July 11

Northern Plains Softball U10 Softball Tournament in Aberdeen.

Northern Plains Softball U12 Softball Tournament in Aberdeen.

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

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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.

Ground Zero's Final Tower

Construction crews broke ground yesterday on the final office tower at the new World Trade Center campus, nearly 25 years after the 9/11 attacks destroyed the complex.

American Express will be the sole tenant of 2 World Trade Center upon its completion, currently slated for 2031. The 55-story glass tower will accommodate up to 10,000 employees across nearly 2 million square feet of office space. At 1,226 feet tall, it will stand 550 feet shorter than One World Trade Center, directly to the west. American Express has not disclosed project costs, but New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D) expects the development to create 3,200 jobs and generate \$6B in economic activity.

Officials began soliciting proposals to rebuild the World Trade Center campus eight months after the terror attacks. The first new building, 7 World Trade Center, opened in 2006, and the landmark One World Trade Center opened in 2014.

Trump International Airport

Palm Beach Airport officially changed its name to President Donald J. Trump International Airport yesterday, becoming the first airport named after a sitting US president. The official airport code will change from PBI to DJT in the coming weeks.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) signed legislation authorizing the change in March, with up to \$5.5M in costs expected for new signs, branding, and other updates. Under the deal, the airport can use Trump's name and likeness, and Trump will not receive royalties or revenue from merchandise sold there. The airport—visited by roughly 8 million people per year—is now one of more than a dozen across the US named after presidents.

Separately, the I-40 bridge in Tennessee was renamed the President Donald J. Trump Bridge yesterday.

Bonnie Tyler Dies

Bonnie Tyler, the pop singer best known for the 1980s ballad "Total Eclipse of the Heart," has died at age 75 after a recent illness following emergency intestinal surgery.

Born Gaynor Hopkins in Wales in 1951, she rose from the local pub-rock scene in the mid-1970s, breaking through with her first worldwide hit "It's a Heartache" in 1977. Her No. 1 hit, "Total Eclipse of the Heart"—originally written for a vampire musical and offered to Tyler after Meat Loaf passed on it—has since surpassed a billion streams across Spotify and YouTube and still surges in popularity during solar eclipses. She also recorded "Holding Out for a Hero," from the 1984 film "Footloose," and released more than a dozen albums, including 2024's "In Berlin." Tyler earned Grammy, Academy of Country Music, and American Music Award nominations, and represented the UK at Eurovision.

Her trademark husky voice emerged after vocal-cord surgery in the late 1970s, when she resumed talking sooner than doctors recommended.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Live-action "Moana" hits theaters with soft \$60M to \$65M domestic debut projections against a \$250M budget.

Low-budget action thriller "Citizen Vigilante" reaches top 10 on Apple and Amazon after boost from Elon Musk.

US' Coco Gauff loses Wimbledon women's singles semifinal in a tiebreaker, Czech Republic's Karolína Muchová and Linda Nosková advance to final Saturday.

Christian Pulisic fractures right leg during US World Cup loss to Belgium.

Terrific curling effort from Kylian Mbappé headlines a 2-0 victory for France as it defeats Morocco, advancing to the semifinals.

Spain takes on Belgium at 3 pm ET, with the winner meeting Les Bleus in the next round.

Science & Technology

Wally Funk, a trailblazing female aviator who eventually became the oldest person to fly to space at age 82, dies at age 87.

Funk was the youngest member of the canceled all-female Mercury 13.

Scientists create a robot that swims, breaks through the water's surface, and soars like a diving bird, potentially inspiring drones and vehicles capable of collecting data from aquatic regions too difficult to reach with traditional vessels.

Coin-sized pockets of turbulence deep in the ocean can change sea levels, storm intensity, and nutrient distribution within decades; scientists say current climate models likely underestimate the importance of these tiny pockets.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.8%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +1.3%).

Micron shares rise after announcing investments of up to \$3B in US semiconductor supply chain.

Fed Chair Kevin Warsh names leaders of five task forces designed to help reshape the central bank; group includes venture capitalist Marc Andreessen and Xbox CEO Asha Sharma.

US existing home sales fell 2.4% month over month in June; median home price of \$440,600 is up 1.8% from a year ago, an all-time high since records began in 1999.

Politics & World Affairs

Iran and the US continue to exchange strikes as Iran buries former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini.

Fire at a shoe factory in southeastern China kills at least 28 people.

Chinese-made shoes accounted for roughly 35% of the US' footwear imports in 2024; see chart.

Prosecutors in the Charlie Kirk assassination case present testimony from Lance Twiggs, former roommate of suspect Tyler Robinson.

GROTON 1912 ★ HISTORICAL JAIL

★
315 1ST AVE. E, GROTON

Open House

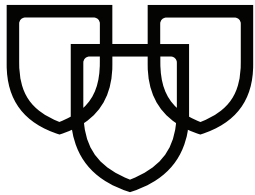
**SUNDAY,
JULY 12,**

★
10 A.M. TO 3 P.M.
★



★ *Come see the
newly restored jail* ★

MAYO CLINIC



6 reasons to eat cottage cheese — and 6 easy ways to get more in your diet

• By Mary Anne Dunkin

Long seen as a bland “diet food,” cottage cheese is gaining new popularity as a protein-packed, versatile addition to everyday meals and snacks.

From smoothies and breakfast bowls to dips and baked dishes, this flexible dairy favorite can be incorporated into breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, and everything in between. Here’s a closer look at what makes it so good for you — and how to add more of it to your diet.

Health benefits of cottage cheese you should know about

Beyond its convenience and versatility, cottage cheese delivers a range of nutrients that support overall health. Here are six science-backed reasons to eat cottage cheese:

1. Provides a high-quality source of protein

Cottage cheese is packed with protein in a form that’s ready to eat. Unlike meat, no cooking or prep is needed, says Tara Schmidt, RDN, LD. “Even a half-cup serving of cottage cheese provides about 11 grams of protein, which is more than you’d typically get from a serving of other cheeses,” she says. Its protein is complete, containing all the essential amino acids your body needs. It also supplies calcium and other key nutrients found in dairy.



2. Supports healthy weight management

Although cottage cheese once was considered an old-fashioned “diet food,” it’s still a smart choice for weight management. Its high protein content helps you feel full longer, which can reduce overall calorie intake and support fat loss. The protein in cottage cheese digests more slowly than protein in other sources, helping you stay satisfied between meals. A high-protein eating plan can help preserve lean mass.

3. Helps manage blood sugar and diabetes risk

Cottage cheese is a protein-rich and relatively low-carbohydrate dairy option that can help support healthy blood sugar levels. Protein slows digestion, which may reduce spikes in blood sugar when eaten with carbohydrates, making cottage cheese a satisfying component of meals or snacks. Its relatively low-carbohydrate content means it generally causes smaller increases in blood sugar than many carb-heavy foods, supporting steady glucose levels throughout the day.

Eating dairy foods such as cottage cheese as part of a balanced, higher protein diet also has been linked in studies to a lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes over time. Including it in your diet can help manage blood sugar and may contribute to long-term metabolic health.

4. Supports pregnancy and maternal health

Cottage cheese provides several key nutrients — including high-quality protein, calcium, phosphorus and certain B vitamins — that play important roles during pregnancy. Protein supports maternal muscle maintenance and healthy growth, while calcium and phosphorus work together to build and maintain strong bones and teeth in both you and baby. These nutrients are part of what makes dairy foods a nutrient-dense choice in dietary guidelines, particularly for people with increased needs during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

"Dairy in general, including cottage cheese, is a great nutritional source for pregnant people," says Schmidt. "Those nutrients are really important in pregnancy because you're building a tiny, tiny skeleton."

5. Promotes bone and dental health

Cottage cheese contains key nutrients, including calcium and phosphorus, that help keep bones and teeth strong. These minerals work together to build and maintain bone structure throughout life. Some varieties also are fortified with vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium more effectively. Getting enough of these nutrients is important at all ages. But it's especially important as you get older, when bone loss can increase the risk of osteoporosis and fractures. Including calcium-rich foods such as cottage cheese as part of a balanced diet can help support long-term bone health and dental health.

6. May support gut health

Some cottage cheese products contain live and active cultures, similar to those found in yogurt. When that's the case, cottage cheese may offer gut-health benefits beyond protein alone. "If you get a protein that has probiotics in it — those live cultures — now we can talk about gut health," Schmidt says. "Just like yogurt."

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that help support a healthy gut microbiome, which plays a role in digestion, immune function and overall metabolic health. Although the probiotic sources of yogurt and kefir have been studied more, certain cultured cottage cheese products also can contribute — as long as the label lists "live and active cultures."

6 easy ways to eat more cottage cheese

Cottage cheese is convenient and flexible, making it easy to add to your diet, Schmidt says. Here are five simple ideas:

1. Use it as a dip or dressing

Swap cottage cheese for high-fat dips. Add garlic, lemon juice or spices or mix with salsa, if desired. "You can dip vegetables — like carrots, cucumbers or even celery — into it instead of ranch to add protein to your snacks," says Schmidt. If you don't like the bumpy texture, blend cottage cheese with a little milk until smooth.

2. Make a sweet treat

Blend with fruit, honey or vanilla for a protein-rich pudding or add to smoothies or smoothie bowls for creaminess without much added sugar.

3. Mix it into eggs

Add cottage cheese to scrambled eggs or omelets like you would other cheeses. "I think it's really yummy," says Schmidt.

4. Cook or bake with it

Use blended cottage cheese instead of heavy cream in pasta sauces. Or use it as a substitute for ricotta in lasagna, stuffed pasta shells or baked ziti. Stir cottage cheese into mashed potatoes, soups or casseroles. Or add it to pancakes, waffles or muffins for moisture and extra protein.

5. Use it as a topper or filling

Top toast with cottage cheese, spread it on crackers or bagels instead of cream cheese, or use it as a sandwich filling in place of other cheeses.

6. Build a savory bowl or quick meal

Use cottage cheese as a base for simple, savory bowls. Top it with vegetables, grains, or leftovers such as roasted veggies, beans, avocado or even a soft-boiled egg for a quick, nutritious meal.

Cottage cheese considerations: Fat and sodium

Choosing between full-fat and low-fat cottage cheese largely comes down to what helps you enjoy dairy consistently. If you prefer the full-fat version, Schmidt advises looking at and possibly adjusting your overall diet. "There are likely other sources of saturated fat in your diet that aren't contributing as much nutrition as dairy is contributing."

Sodium is another factor to keep in mind. "One population that I'd be mindful of is my patients with high blood pressure or hypertension, because it absolutely can be a high-salt food," she says. You don't have to avoid it entirely, but "note that cottage cheese is going to be high in sodium and make sure to not have it with other high-sodium sides or other food groups." Considering the whole meal can help you keep sodium in check while still enjoying this protein-packed dairy.

The renewed interest in cottage cheese reflects how people eat today. Its high-protein content, minimal preparation and flexibility make it easy to fit into meals and snacks throughout the day. With mindful choices around sodium and fat, it can be a satisfying and nutritious addition to a balanced diet.

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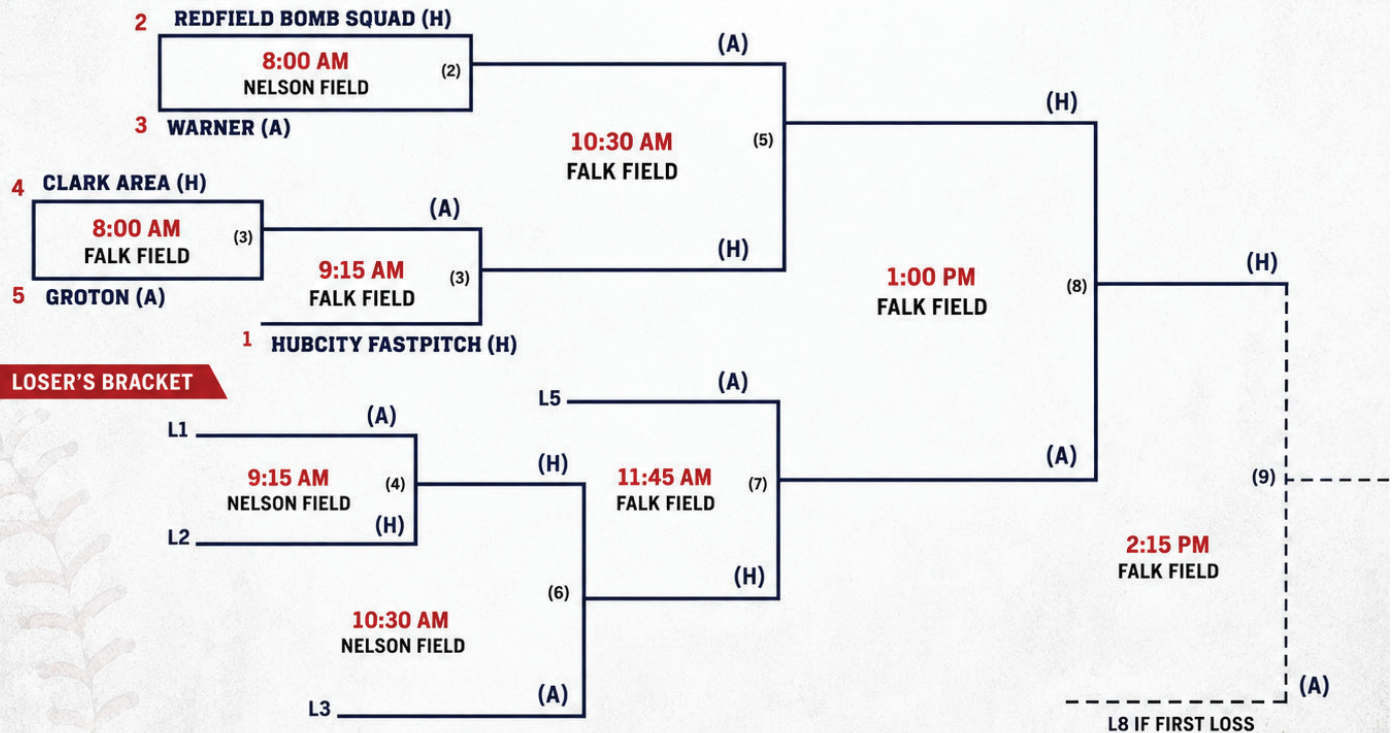
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NORTHERN PLAINS SOFTBALL 14U TOURNAMENT

★ FALK FIELD & NELSON FIELD ★

SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2026 IN GROTON

WINNER'S BRACKET



(H) = HOME TEAM
(A) = AWAY TEAM

★ ALL GAMES PLAYED AT FALK FIELD & NELSON FIELD ★

Secretary of State Divisions of Business Services and General Services Relocation

(Pierre, S.D.) – Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson announces the Division of Business Services and the Division of General Services moved to the State Capitol Building.

Effective immediately, both divisions are located at:

South Dakota State Capitol

500 East Capitol Avenue, Suite 124

Pierre, SD 57501

This move places both divisions on the first floor of the State Capitol Building, providing a centralized and convenient location for individuals conducting business with the Secretary of State's Office.

Business Services assists customers with business entity filings, Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filings, trademarks, notary public commissions, and other business-related services. General Services assists customers with pistol permits, raffle requests, lobbyist registrations, apostilles, and general information.

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SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION "B"

14U BASEBALL

REGION 1B • GROTON LEGION POST 39

JULY 16-18

LOCKE-KARST FIELD, GROTON



1 REDFIELD POST 92

— GAME 1 —

THURSDAY, JULY 16

5:00 P.M.

3 GROTON POST 39

WINNER G1

WINNER G2

— GAME 2 —

30 MINUTES
AFTER GAME 1

2 CLARK POST 60

— GAME 4 —

30 MINUTES
AFTER GAME 3

LOSER G1

— GAME 3 —

FRIDAY, JULY 17

5:00 P.M.
(HOME)

WINNER G3

LOSER G2

IF NECESSARY

— GAME 5 —

SATURDAY, JULY 18

1:00 P.M.

(IF WINNER G4 HAS FIRST LOSS)

REGION 1B
CHAMPION



★ TO BE COMPLETED BY JULY 19TH, ON TWO (3) CONSECUTIVE DAYS ★

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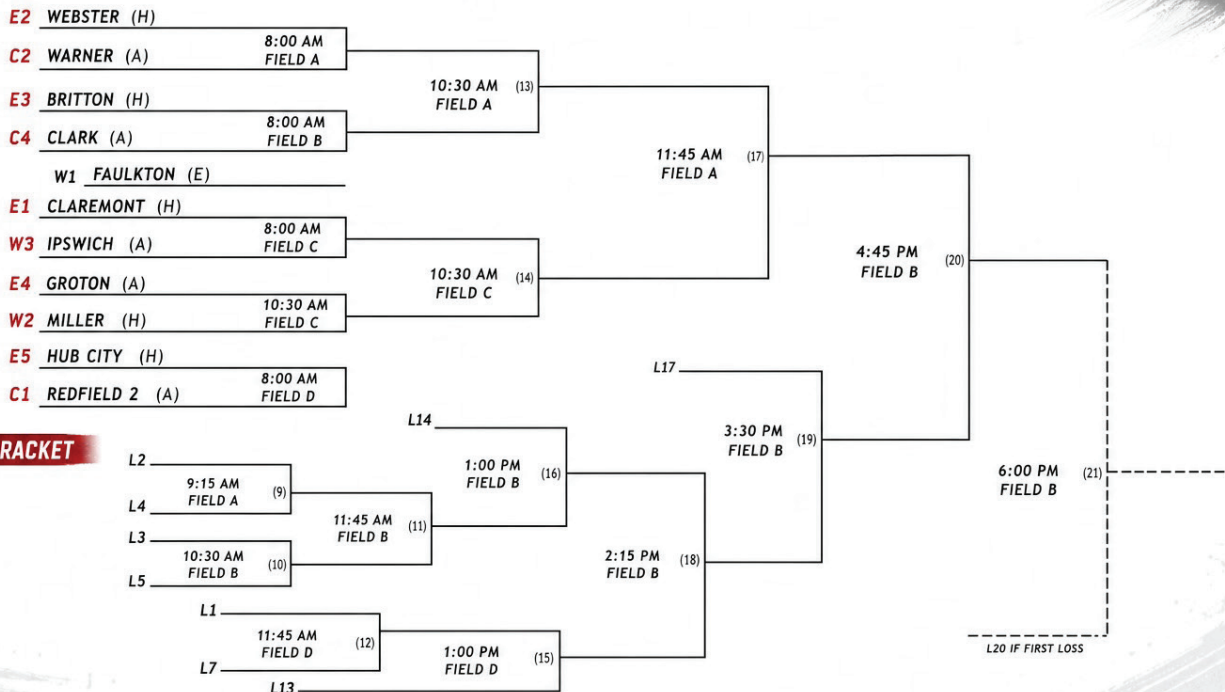
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NORTHERN PLAINS SOFTBALL 10U TOURNAMENT

MOCCASIN CREEK SOFTBALL COMPLEX



WINNER'S BRACKET



LOSER'S BRACKET

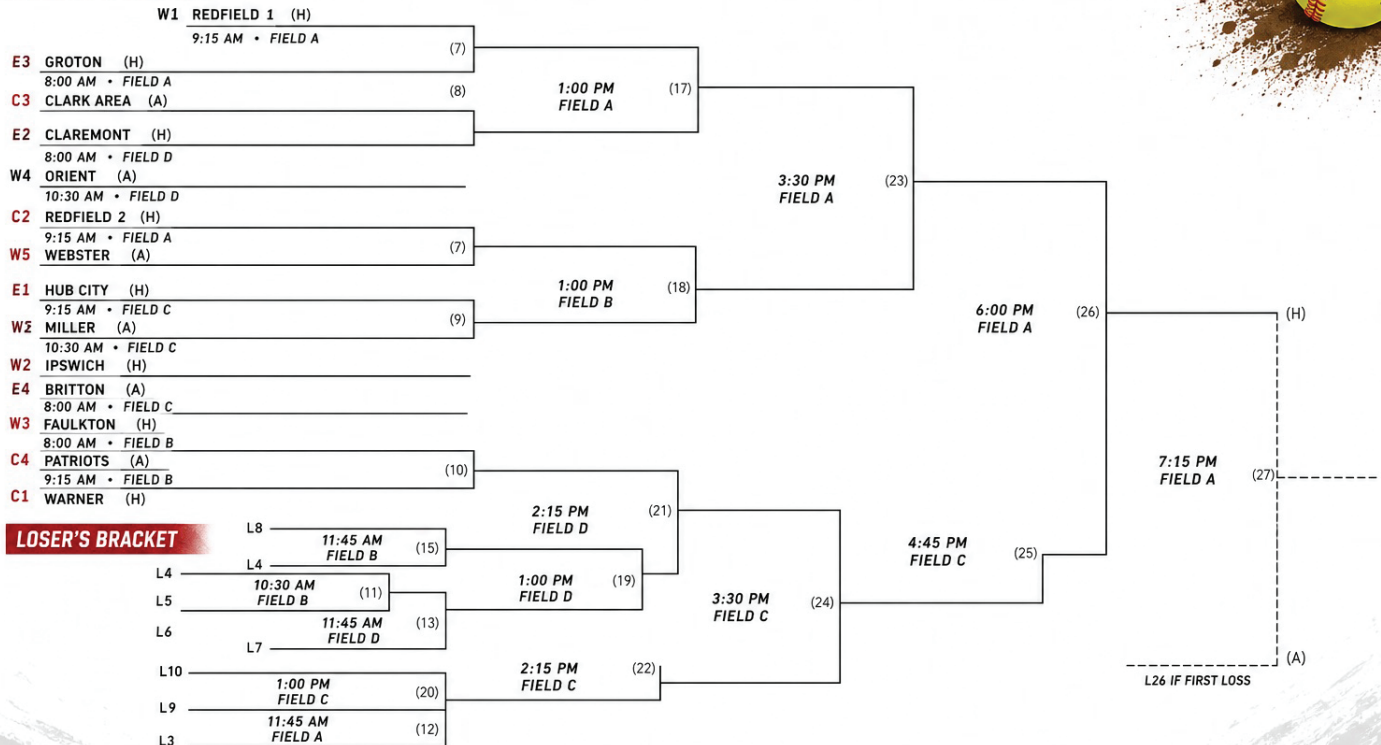
SATURDAY, JULY 11, ABERDEEN

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NORTHERN PLAINS SOFTBALL 12U TOURNAMENT PLAYER'S NORTH COMPLEX

WINNER'S BRACKET



(H) DENOTES HOME TEAM

★★★ SATURDAY, JULY 11, ABERDEEN ★★★

South Dakota's economy shows mixed picture in latest data

South Dakota's economy presents a more balanced picture than a single quarterly statistic might suggest, according to the latest data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and other federal sources.

The state's economy ranked 50th among the states in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth during the first quarter of 2026, posting a 1.6% decline. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported state GDP growth ranged from a 4.5% increase in Washington to a 1.6% decrease in South Dakota, placing South Dakota last for the quarter.

However, that quarterly ranking does not reflect the state's performance over a longer period.

For the full year of 2025, South Dakota's real GDP grew by 1.4%, placing it well above the nation's slowest-growing state. North Dakota recorded the lowest annual growth at 0.3%, while Florida and South Carolina tied for the highest annual growth at 3.1%.

Other economic indicators also paint a more favorable picture of South Dakota's economy.

In 2025, South Dakota ranked 25th nationally in real GDP per capita, placing it near the middle of the nation in economic output per resident. The state's labor market also remained one of the strongest in the country, with the nation's lowest unemployment rate at 2.1% in May 2026.

Taken together, the figures show that while South Dakota ranked last in economic growth during the first quarter of 2026, it did not rank last for annual economic growth in 2025. Instead, the state posted moderate annual growth, ranked in the middle of the nation in GDP per capita, and continued to lead the country with the lowest unemployment rate. The quarterly decline underscores the volatility that can occur in an agriculture-dependent economy, while the broader economic indicators suggest the state's overall economy remains relatively stable.

UJS Proposes Merger of Fourth and Seventh Judicial Circuits

PIERRE, S.D.—The South Dakota Unified Judicial System (UJS) State Court Administrator's Office has proposed to the South Dakota Supreme Court consideration of a merger of the administrative structures of the Fourth Judicial Circuit and Seventh Judicial Circuit.

The Fourth Judicial Circuit consists of Butte, Corson, Dewey, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Perkins and Ziebach counties. The Seventh Judicial Circuit consists of Custer, Fall River, Oglala Lakota and Pennington counties. The proposed merger is intended to increase operational efficiencies for UJS.

A series of public forums will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2026, to present information related to the proposal and gather comments and feedback in advance of any formal rule proposal to the South Dakota Supreme Court. The public forum locations are:

Rapid City: Pennington County Courthouse (Courtroom C2), 315 St. Joseph St., 8:30-9:30 a.m. MDT
Sturgis: Meade County Courthouse (Courtroom 3), 1425 Sherman St., 11 a.m.-noon MDT
Lemmon: Lonesome Dove Conference Center, 312 Main Ave., 3:30-4:30 p.m. MDT

The forums are open to the public. Following a short presentation by the State Court Administrator's Office, there will be an opportunity for public comments and questions.

Written input or comments may be submitted to the State Court Administrator's Office by email to comment@ujs.state.sd.us or by mail to State Court Administrator's Office, Attention: Judicial Circuit Merger Proposal, 500 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. The deadline to submit written input or comments is Oct. 1, 2026.

South Dakota courts are organized into a unified judicial system and currently consist of seven judicial circuits. The State Court Administrator's Office provides centralized administrative assistance and support services to South Dakota's courts to ensure efficient and responsive operation.

Land for Sale

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

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

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

July 13, 2026 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of June 8, 2026 school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approval of year ending (FY2026) district bills.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approve June 2026 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approve June 2026 School Lunch Report.
4. Policy Discussion – Liability Insurance Coverage
5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

ADJOURN

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ANNUAL REORGANIZATION BUSINESS:

1. Call to Order with members present.
2. Installation of incumbent board members Grant Rix and Heather Lerseth-Fliehs followed by election of president and vice president as well as appointments to board committees.
3. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

7:30 PM – Fiscal Year 2027 District Budget Hearing

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approve July 2026 District bills for payment.
2. Designate legal counsel/attorney...Rodney Freeman of Churchill, Manolis, and Freeman of Huron.
3. Designate Business Manager as custodian of all district accounts.
4. Authorize Business Manager to continue existing funds and establish new accounts and to invest and reinvest funds in local institutions which serve the greatest advantage to the District and set business manager bond.
5. Authorize Business Manager to publish staff salaries.
6. Designate official bank depository...Dacotah Bank
7. Adopt Groton Area School District Policy Manual with such revisions as previously approved.
8. Adopt Special Education Comprehensive Plan.
9. Authorize office personnel to administer Custodial Funds & NSLP (school lunch) funds, with oversight by business office management.
10. Authorize Superintendent to administer or direct federal programs, with Consolidated Application (Title programs) and related ESSA compliance issues assigned to building principals.
11. Appoint Maria Martens as District's McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison.

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12. Appoint Superintendent to act as Asbestos Compliance Officer.
13. Authorize Superintendent or designee to close school in emergency situations or inclement weather.
14. Authorize Superintendent or designee to institute NSLP & School Breakfast Agreement.
15. Adopt Food Safety Plan, HACCP-Based Standard Operating Procedures.
16. Authorize Superintendent or designee to institute ASBSD school bus mutual assistance pact.
17. Authorize Business Manager to transfer petty cash and incident payment funds (SDCL 13-18-16/17).
18. Approve peripheral sports and other volunteer school workers such as chain gang, line judges, Booster Club/PAC workers, assistant coaches, volunteer drivers, school board members, etc. to be included in the school's worker's compensation insurance coverage.
19. Approve Open Enrollment Application #27-10.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Review surplus items and declare surplus.
2. Review and acknowledge South Dakota Open Meeting Law pursuant to SDCL 1-25-23.
3. Adopt FY2027 District Budget and authorize Business Manager to file tax request with county auditors.
4. Middle School/High School Building Project Discussion
 - a. Approve Construction Manager at-Risk Contract.
5. Approve out-of-district transportation requests from Langford Area School District and Webster Area School District.
6. Open and approve fuel quotes.
7. Open and approve newspaper quotes and designate official newspaper for FY2027.
8. Appoint board member to serve as voting member of the North Central Special Education Cooperative Governing Board for the 2026-2027 school year.
9. Set dates and times for regular school board meetings.
10. Set salaries for board members...presently at \$50/meeting; \$75/meeting for chairman; mileage as applicable.
11. Set rate for substitute teachers for 2026-2027 school year...recommend \$140/day [Currently \$135/day].
12. Set rate for substitute bus drivers for 2026-2027 school year...recommend \$105/day [Currently \$100/day].
13. Establish activity admission & school lunch prices for 2026-2027:

Admission:	Recommend	Current
	Adult \$6; Doubleheader \$7	Adult \$5; Doubleheader \$6
	Adult 10-punch ticket - \$50	Adult 10-punch ticket - \$45
	Adult All-Activities Pass - \$75	Adult All-Activities Pass - \$75
	1 st - 12 th Grade - \$5	1 st -12 th Grade - \$4
	1 st -5 th Grade Activity Ticket - \$30	1 st -5 th Grade Activity Ticket - \$25
	6 th -12 th Grade Activity Ticket - \$35	6 th -12 th Grade Activity Ticket - \$30
Breakfast	Recommend: K-5 - \$2.85; 6-12 - \$3.35; Adult - \$3.75 Current: K-5 - \$2.60; 6-12 - \$3.10; Adult \$3.50	
Lunch	Recommend: K-5 - \$3.85; 6-12 - \$4.35; Adult \$5.50 Current: K-5 - \$3.60; 6-12 - \$4.10; Adult \$5.25	
Seconds Lunch	K-12; \$2.00 Recommend No Change	
Second Milk	\$0.50 Recommend No Change	

14. Approve resignation with liquidated damages of Kiya Stillman, 7-9 ELA Teacher, for the 2026-27 school year.

ADJOURN

As travel costs rise, many families find summer adventures closer to home

By Amina Aidarkhanova
South Dakota News Watch

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Instead of planning long vacations, many South Dakota families are spending summer weekends closer to home, choosing festivals, community events and family attractions that offer affordable ways to make memories.

Travel officials and local event organizers say the shift reflects a broader trend of travelers taking shorter trips, driving instead of flying and choosing destinations closer to home.

"We did re-coin that term 'staycation' again this year," said Shari Budahl Avery, publicity chair for the Brookings Summer Arts Festival. "If things are a little tight but you want to get away for a day, we can provide that experience."

Families are redefining summer travel

Travel South Dakota reports that affordability, scenic beauty and family experiences remain among the state's strongest tourism draws. The department said 58% of visitors travel within 150 miles of their homes, reflecting continued interest in nearby destinations.

Shawn Steward, public affairs manager for AAA South Dakota, said travelers are adjusting their plans rather than abandoning vacations altogether.

"People still want to travel," Steward said. "They're just making different choices."

Steward said those choices often include shorter trips, road travel and destinations that require less time and money.

Local events become summer destinations

Local events across South Dakota are benefiting from that shift. Budahl Avery said the Brookings Summer Arts Festival has long attracted visitors looking for affordable entertainment close to home.

"We're kind of dead center in a pretty good population center," she said. "People can come on what



Families visit attractions and spend time together on June 25, 2026, during intermission at the Carden International Circus in Brookings, S.D. (Photo:

Amina Aidarkhanova/South Dakota News Watch)

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one friend from Texas called a 'tank trip' - somewhere you can drive on one tank of gas and get home."

The two-day festival features nearly 180 juried artists, live entertainment, children's activities, food vendors and historical demonstrations. Budahl Avery said the event gives families an opportunity to spend time together without the expense of a major vacation.

Affordable, convenient entertainment

Other local attractions are seeing similar interest. The Carden International Circus brought families to the Dakota Bank Center in Brookings on June 25, 2026, during its summer tour.

Ringmaster and comedian Rulito Videla said families are looking for affordable entertainment options that create lasting memories.

"If they are staying home, support your local events," Videla said. "The circus is family-oriented entertainment. You create memories."

Some Brookings-area families said smaller local outings have become part of their summer routines.

Erica Quam said her family often chooses several smaller activities instead of one large vacation.

"We live right near Brookings," Quam said. "It's close, there were some coupons that made it more affordable, and it's just a fun, easy activity."

Sienna Vanmeveren said staying closer to home helps her family manage costs.

"It's easier than traveling somewhere," she said, adding that she would likely travel more if finances allowed.

Not every family is changing its travel habits. Sviatlana Senchanka said her family recently completed a road trip from South Dakota to California and continues to spend time outdoors locally.

For Budahl Avery, the appeal of community events goes beyond saving money.

"What keeps families coming back?" she said. "Tradition. Joy. Making memories."

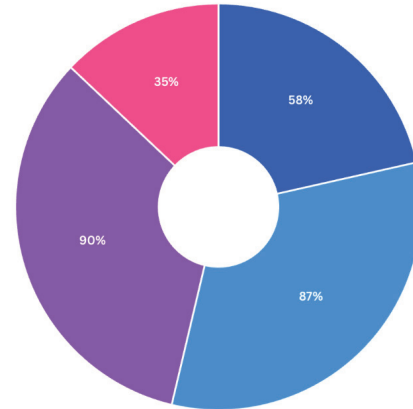
Whether families travel across the country or stay close to home, organizers and visitors say meaningful summer experiences do not always require a long-distance trip.

South Dakota News Watch is an independent nonprofit. Read, donate and subscribe for free at sdnewswatch.org. Amina Aidarkhanova received the 2026 Jeffrey B. Nelson Investigative Journalism Endowed Internship and the Chuck Raasch and Sandy Johnson Scholarship from the SDSU Foundation. Contact: amina.aidarkhanova@sdnewswatch.org.

Most South Dakota visitors travel close to home

According to Travel South Dakota's latest visitor profile, most visitors travel within 150 miles of home, while high satisfaction and repeat visitation continue to support regional tourism.

■ Travel within 150 miles of home ■ Likely to recommend South Dakota ■ Planning to return
■ Primary visitor base (Boomers)



Source: [Travel South Dakota: Future Partners](http://TravelSouthDakota.org) • Data provided by Travel South Dakota spokeswoman Katlyn Svendsen via email.

Graphic by Amina Aidarkhanova/South Dakota News Watch

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





Fact brief: Does a Supreme Court ruling bar South Dakota from adding differing health warnings to pesticide labels?

Yes.

The ruling in *Monsanto v. Durnell* bars all sub-national entities from adding health warnings to pesticide labels different from the federal government's.

Missouri farmer John Durnell sued Monsanto, the original creator of Roundup, after Durnell developed cancer, arguing the product label should have included the pesticide's alleged cancer risk.

A jury awarded Durnell \$1.25 million. The decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled against him in a 7-2 vote on grounds that states cannot impose labeling requirements "in addition to or different from" those required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

While the EPA and European Union stated Roundup is unlikely to be carcinogenic, the World Health Organization deemed it "probably carcinogenic to humans."

The South Dakota Agri-Business Association supported the court's decision, saying a consistent national standard helps agricultural retailers, applicators and farmers when selling, handling and applying crop protection products.

This fact brief is responsive to claims such as this one.

Sources

Supreme Court of the United States, *Monsanto Co. v. Durnell*

Revisor of Missouri, Strict liability for failure to warn

European Food Safety Authority, Glyphosate: EFSA updates toxicological profile

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Glyphosate

World Health Organization, IARC Monograph on Glyphosate

South Dakota Agri-Business Association, SDABA Statement

About fact briefs

Fact briefs are bite-sized, well-sourced explanations that offer clear "yes" or "no" answers to questions, confusions and unsupported claims circulating online. They rely on publicly available data and documents, often from the original source. Fact briefs are written and published by South Dakota News Watch as part of the Gigafact network. Submit a question for us to answer on the tipline.

South Dakota News Watch is an independent nonprofit. Read, subscribe for free and donate at sdnewswatch.org. Contact freelance reporter Emily DeCock: emily.decock@sdnewswatch.org.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State water board approves future use permit for Milbank, citing increased demand

Nearby water system worried there may not be enough in aquifer
BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

The City of Milbank was granted a future use permit from the South Dakota Water Management Board on Wednesday, despite opposition from a neighboring rural water system and concerns about drying the aquifer.

The state's water management board, whose members are appointed by the governor, makes decisions on the appropriation of the state's water resources, in addition to reviewing streamgauge data and data on groundwater levels and water use.

The vote in Milbank's favor was unanimous.

The future use permit reserves water rights but won't give the Milbank the ability to use additional water immediately. The city would need to return to the board with a water permit application once it's identified a specific "beneficial use," which under state law means a use that is "consistent with the interests of the public."

Future use permits are also subject to review every seven years to determine if there's a continuing need for reserved water.



The South Dakota Board of Water Management at its July meeting in Pierre, South Dakota, on July 8, 2026. From left to right: board members Kelly Hepler, Jim Hutmacher, board counsel David McVey, board members Rodney Freeman and Peggy Dixon. (Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

Growth drives Milbank request

Milbank is a city of 3,500 in a section of northeastern South Dakota that's experienced significant growth in recent years. The city got a \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2024 to expand its industrial park, and it's also seen a milk storage operation expand to serves a local

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cheese factory that's increased its processing capacity.

A city leader didn't point to a specific project or development that would need a certain amount of water during Wednesday's board meeting, but rather pointed to stress on the city's current infrastructure.

Milbank City Administrator Steve Pendergrass said the city's experiencing an increased demand for water and issues with treating water and wastewater.

"We've got to start looking at alternative routes, so that's why we're looking at this future water use," Pendergrass said.

Milbank uses a yearly average of 1.1 million gallons of water per day, pulled mostly from the Veblen and Revillo aquifers. It's asking for the right to draw more from the Antelope Valley Aquifer, which rests underneath Grant, Deuel and Codington counties. The permit will allow Milbank to claim an additional 1,120 acre-feet of water per year from that aquifer in the future.

The U.S. Geological Survey describes an acre-foot as "the amount of water that would cover a football field in one foot of water," or about 325,900 gallons.

Opposition: Aquifer could be strained

The additional 1,120 acre-feet per year withdrawal by Milbank could have a "unique and detrimental effect" on the Grant-Roberts Rural Water System's existing wells, as well as on the Antelope Valley Aquifer recharge rate, according to the rural water system's complaint against the permit.

Engineers at the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources budget available water by subtracting the water already appropriated from an aquifer from the amount added back each year.

The Antelope Valley Aquifer's recharge rate is an estimated 6,700 acre-feet per year. A little more than 3,500 acre-feet is already reserved for irrigation, drinking water and future use, according to the engineer's report on Milbank's application.

There's enough water in the aquifer to satisfy the permit, according to the department's report. But an engineer with DGR Engineering told board members there's a "significant difference" in water availability on either side of Punished Woman Lake, a body of surface water in the aquifer on the northern side.

"Recharge that occurs in the southern half of the aquifer is not available for withdrawal in the northern one-third of that aquifer," said Matthew Oedekoven of DGR, who questioned the way the state's hydrologic budget was prepared.

The rural water system uses DGR for engineering expertise. Oedekoven said he has "significant concerns" about whether the aquifer has enough readily accessible water to offer Milbank the 1,120 acre feet annually that the city requested in its permit application.

"There may be some available, but I am concerned that there is the full 1,120," Oedekovan said.

The Grant-Roberts water system serves about 2,050 customers across Grant, Roberts, Codington and Deuel counties in South Dakota, and LacQui Parle County in Minnesota. It draws water from the Antelope Valley Aquifer. It's also spending about \$600,000 this year to drill two additional wells, General Manager Brent Hoffmann told board members Wednesday.

In the past decade, the system has started supplying water to Big Stone City and Corona. It's currently building lines into the city of Marvin and is looking to add the city of Summit within coming years.

"We have growth every year," Hoffmann said. "You have the small communities, we seem to be losing people, but a lot of people want to move up to the Big Stone Lake area and that's where a lot of growth is."

Milbank's future use might impact other areas, Hoffmann said.

"I think Milbank should have their future water rights," he said. "I just don't feel that this permit would be appropriate at this point in time, based on the data as we read it."

Board member Rodney Freeman acknowledged those concerns before his vote.

"There were some interesting points and issues raised, but I believe those issues will be addressed if and when the city of Milbank comes in and wants to put it into beneficial use," Freeman said.

The permit put Milbank in line for water, Pendergrass said, but that doesn't mean they aren't also looking for water from other sources than the Antelope Valley Aquifer.

"We aren't putting all our eggs in one basket," Pendergrass said.

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.

Under Trump, deportations of once-protected immigrant kids have tripled

BY MICA ROSENBERG, PROPUBLICA AND JEFF ERNSTHAUSEN, PROPUBLICA

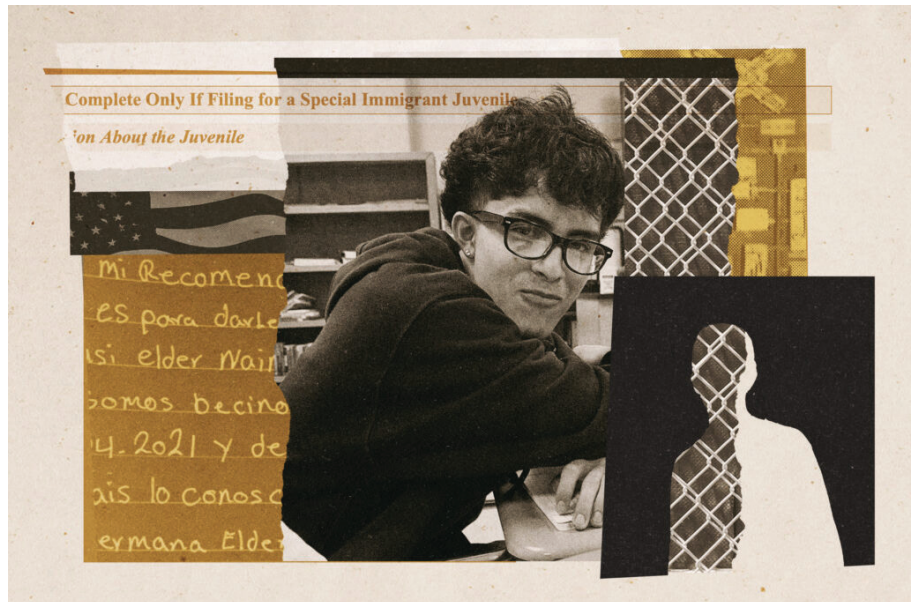
For the first few weeks after he arrived at the immigration detention center in Winnfield, Louisiana, 18-year-old Elder Chavez was wide awake most nights, listening to the creaky sounds of the bunk beds and to voices of dozens of men, also sleepless, around him. He suffered terrible headaches and would finally doze off around 4 a.m. — just when guards would begin to summon the detainees for breakfast. Then he'd sleep for most of the rest of the day.

He had developed the schedule of an owl. And he thought to himself that the dark circles that had appeared under his eyes made him look like one.

He'd landed at the Winn Correctional Center after Alabama state police had caught him in December going 15 mph over the speed limit and driving without a license. He was on his way home from getting his favorite sandwich, carne asada, when he was pulled over.

Once the officers realized he was an immigrant, they called U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Chavez offered to show them documents that proved he wasn't living in hiding. Immigration authorities had granted him Special Immigrant Juvenile Status because, as a toddler, he'd been abandoned by his parents in Honduras and had come to this country on his own when he was 14. His sister, who'd migrated years earlier and was living in Alabama, offered to help take care of him. A lawyer was helping him pursue permanent residency.



Elder Chavez crossed the border as an unaccompanied minor in 2022. Now 18, he sits in Louisiana's Winn Correctional Center facing deportation after a traffic violation.

(Illustration by Emily Scherer for ProPublica.) Source images: Courtesy of the Chavez family, JMS2/Flickr, mikepick/Flickr, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Immigration enforcement in South Dakota FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

South Dakota governor's office reports helping with over 800 deportations as feds deliver funding 'There are moments where I break down,' says wife of deported Huron resident

International student numbers decline in South Dakota amid immigration crackdown

Grant cancellation means children have to 'defend themselves' in immigration court, advocate says

"I'm legal in this country," Chavez pleaded with the officers. But the officers, he said, weren't having it. One of them told him, "Your papers are of no use to me."

And just like that, an otherwise law-abiding high school student — who loved his welding and carpentry classes, had braces and a girlfriend, and spent weekends playing soccer at the park with his nieces and

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nephews — was thrown into detention and put on a path toward deportation.

"I'm just waiting here," he said during a video call from detention. "I really don't know what's going to happen to me."

Chavez is hardly alone. A first-of-its-kind analysis of Immigration and Customs Enforcement data found that unaccompanied minors living in the U.S. are being detained and removed at about three times the rate they were during the last time President Donald Trump was in office. In addition, a ProPublica analysis of court data found that immigration judges, who report to the Justice Department, have issued more than 10,000 removal and voluntary departure orders each month for immigrant minors who either migrated alone or with relatives, a rate that is nearly four times higher than in Trump's last term.

The vast majority of unaccompanied minors removed last year had no criminal history in the United States, ProPublica's analysis of ICE data showed.

Before Trump returned to office last year, Chavez would have likely been given a ticket and allowed to return to his sister. But as part of the president's mass deportation campaign, his administration has moved to systematically roll back policies that provided immigrant minors access to legal counsel and relief from deportation while they pursued permission to permanently stay in the country. Those policies were based on laws that had been implemented over more than two decades, with bipartisan support, because both parties believed unaccompanied immigrant minors — ill-prepared to navigate a new country on their own, much less a legal system daunting to most adults — are especially vulnerable to trafficking and other kinds of exploitation.

Congress created SIJ specifically to protect immigrants, like Chavez, who are under 21 and are able to prove in family court that they had been abused, neglected or abandoned by at least one parent in their home countries.

Trump administration officials have long argued that not only are the programs designed to help unaccompanied minors rife with fraud, but that their very existence has encouraged hundreds of thousands of children to embark on dangerous journeys to the border, increasing their risk of falling into criminal hands. To make its case, his administration points to the record 450,000 unaccompanied minors who arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border and were released into the country under President Joe Biden.

Neither those children nor the people to whom they were released were properly vetted, say Trump administration officials. As a result, administration officials say, some of the children became victims of abuse or exploitation. Alarming numbers of them were found working illegally in factories or in other jobs that put them at risk for trafficking, injury and wage theft.

Other minors, the administration has said, became criminals. It put out a July 2025 government report that said since 2013, some 19,000 SIJ petitioners were found to have criminal arrest records, including hundreds with serious charges like murder and sex offenses. The administration says the best way to stop such abuses and criminality is to disincentivize immigrant children from coming in the first place.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said Trump is "undoing the damage Biden did." Responding to questions about ProPublica's data analysis, which was based on data provided via Freedom of Information Act requests and was validated with outside experts, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said the agency "could not verify the veracity" of the data.

Advocates argue that the administration is using exceptional cases to cast all immigrant minors and the adults who sponsored them in a negative light. They say that some of their clients who have been living in the U.S. for years, including those, like Chavez, who have since turned 18, face serious risks if sent back to their home countries. The majority of the unaccompanied minors who have come to the United States in the last decade were fleeing Central American countries crushed by economic turmoil, violence and political upheaval. Some came from families riven by poverty and domestic violence. Some, like Chavez, have no parents to go back to.

"These children have been through incredibly harrowing and traumatic experiences," said Michael Lukens, the executive director of the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, a legal defense organization. "And ICE is retraumatizing them."

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To the administration's claims that its policies are aimed at protecting minors, he said, "If you're worried about the welfare of kids, stop rounding kids up and trying to deport them."

Deportation orders for 25 minors in three hours

Sometimes the deportation orders issued in immigration court have been coming so fast that lawyers say even they have a hard time explaining them to their clients. Within a span of three hours on a single morning in April in a downtown New York immigration courtroom, Judge Jem Sponzo issued deportation orders for 25 minors, almost everyone on her docket appearing virtually that morning. Some of the hearings were only a few minutes long, and some of the minors were too young to understand what was happening to them.

Among the children in court that day was an 8-year old girl from Ecuador who was seeking asylum and SIJ. The girl's mother had already won asylum in a separate case. But Sponzo ordered the girl to be deported anyway.

In another case, an attorney pleaded for more time to prepare enough evidence to support an asylum petition for her client from Guatemala. The attorney said her client's home in Guatemala was dominated by an abusive father whose violence made it hard for her to gather information she needed for the case. Sponzo politely denied the request, saying, "I empathize and thank you for your efforts." Then she ordered the child deported.

A high school senior from Guatemala who lives in Queens, with side-swept black hair and wearing a short sleeve athletic shirt, appeared on a video screen from a room with piled-up clothes on the bed and an American flag tacked on the wall. He stayed on mute while his lawyer asked for more time for his applications for SIJ and asylum to be processed. Sponzo said no and ordered him deported. His lawyer said in an interview her client is now afraid he could be picked up by ICE at any time.

At the end of the day, several of the attorneys said they felt blindsided by the judge's rapid-fire denials. Although they all said they would appeal her rulings, which could buy their clients some time to stay in the U.S., one said the deportation orders would "hang over their heads like a loaded gun."

Olivia Cassin, a former immigration judge who oversaw juvenile dockets in New York, said that before Trump returned to office, there was widespread recognition that it took time for immigrant minors' SIJ and asylum petitions to work their way through the backlogged system. For SIJ recipients, getting a green card often takes years. Judges typically gave minors that time. Now the authorities overseeing immigration courts have instructed them not to do so. Sponzo cited those instructions at the end of many of the cases she heard that day in April.

Cassin is one of the more than 100 immigration judges who have been fired since Trump returned to office. Some of the judges who lost their jobs said they believe they were pushed out because the administration saw them as not aligned with its agenda. But they also say they've received no official explanation for their firings. Sponzo was also fired recently. She could not be reached for comment.

The Justice Department did not respond to questions about the firings.

It's not just the overhaul of the immigration courts that is having an effect on immigrant kids. Early on in Trump's second term, officials moved to curb funding for advocacy groups that provide legal services to unaccompanied minors. It also put an end to a Biden-era policy known as "deferred action," which protected minors who had been granted SIJ from deportation. SIJ on its own does not confer legal status, and the deferred action policy was implemented to cover those with SIJ until they could get their green cards.

After advocacy groups took the administration to court, federal judges ordered the government to restore funding for legal assistance and access to deferred action for SIJ recipients. Despite those rulings, some legal advocates say they still have not been paid what they're owed. And earlier this month, several groups said federal agents appeared at their Washington-area offices, seeking to look at client files, even though they didn't have warrants. The advocates said they saw the move as an attempt to intimidate them.

As for granting deferred action, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services said in a statement that the agency would do so only under "compelling circumstances on a case-by-case basis." DHS, which oversees USCIS and ICE, emphasized in an email that having SIJ "does NOT confer lawful status," adding that "any

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recipient may be subject to removal." The agency did not respond to a question about the agents who visited advocates' offices.

Over the last year, the administration says it has tracked down 146,000 of the unaccompanied minors who entered the country under Biden in order to check on their well-being. The majority of all the minors who entered the country in recent years had been released to one or both parents in the United States or to other close relatives.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said at a June press conference that some of the welfare checks found minors were doing fine with their families. But he asserted that he'd also tracked down children who were in the hands of rapists and other criminals. "We start digging into these cases and you start hearing absolute horrific things," he said.

When asked for verifiable details about some of the cases Mullin mentioned, DHS did not respond. A DHS spokesperson later sent a list of 16 people who had sponsored immigrant minors and had previously been charged with crimes including assault, drug trafficking or domestic violence. Meanwhile, Justice Department officials said they'd indicted less than a handful of people on charges of smuggling or exploiting immigrant minors.

No officials from DHS or the Justice Department explained what had become of any of the children connected to those indictments. As for immigrants who had entered the U.S. as children and are now adults, Mullin said, "we are working on the process of sending them back."

Unsafe and unsanitary conditions

Soon after Chavez arrived in detention, one of the men in his cell recognized the teen's pattern of sleeping through the day as a silent cry for help. Carlos Della Valle, who had migrated to the United States from Mexico, was attuned to Chavez's struggles because he had a son around the same age. Even in detention, Chavez, with a head full of tousled black hair and big brown eyes, had an easy laugh and smile. Della Valle worried that Chavez was "losing valuable time that he's never going to get back."

Winn was a tough place, advocates and detainees said. Two migrants died there earlier this year. One of the deaths was reportedly caused by cardiovascular disease, and authorities have not determined a cause for the other.

A recent report by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General described unsafe and unsanitary conditions at Winn, including leaking ceilings, dirty food prep areas and an incident in which a guard put a detainee in a prohibited choke hold. A DHS spokesperson said that the agency is working to address the issues raised in the report, adding, "our death rates are lower than most state prisons."

Della Valle began nudging young Chavez out of bed in the mornings and put him to work helping keep their cellblock clean.

Detainees were given an hour a day outside, sometimes less than that. Della Valle told Chavez that keeping himself busy, in whatever constructive ways possible, was the only way to make it through the monotony with his sanity intact.

Chavez briefly took a job in the barber shop that paid the standard wage for someone in detention — \$1 a day — but he said that giving haircuts to around 80 men in a shift was so grueling that he only lasted a month. Instead, Chavez and Della Valle pored over passages from the Bible together. They sat together for most every meal. Chavez learned to mix packets of powdered juice just the way Della Valle liked it.

Della Valle offered to help Chavez navigate the immigration system. He knew it well. In 1997 he'd twice illegally entered the United States. He was deported the first time but illegally entered again, married a U.S. citizen soon after and settled in Pennsylvania.

Because of his reentry, which is a felony, he has been ineligible to regularize his status. But he lived underground with little worry. Immigration authorities generally avoided targeting immigrants with long ties to their communities, like him. Not anymore.

Authorities intercepted Della Valle when he and his wife were returning from a Virgin Islands vacation, though they released him on bond at the time. Months later, however, he was taken into ICE detention. By the time he met Chavez, he had spent months being transferred among close to a dozen holding fa-

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ilities. He worried about what detention might do to Chavez. Other men in his cellblock, who nicknamed Chavez "El Niño," worried too.

"It was hard to see him, you know, because he's just a boy. He's not a grown man," Della Valle said. "I had to do whatever I could for him."

Federal courts push back

While the administration has made progress bending immigration courts to its will, there's evidence that federal courts, where tens of thousands of immigrants have challenged their detentions as illegal, are pushing back.

The National Immigration Project, a nonprofit legal advocacy group, tracked the cases of 263 immigrants who entered the country as unaccompanied minors and SIJ applicants. The group found that federal judges ordered releases or bond hearings in all but 12 of them since the start of the second Trump administration. In March, U.S. District Judge Gary Brown issued a scathing rebuke in one such case, writing, "The laws of human decency condemn such villainy."

The administration can set policy, he wrote, but he added that "it is forbidden from trampling our system of laws — a system which has safeguarded this nation for close to 250 years."

Among those recently released was 20-year-old Fredy Martinez. Born in Honduras, he was a teenager when he crossed the border as an unaccompanied minor. He had graduated from high school in Texas and was delivering a DoorDash order on his bike when he was detained, according to court documents about his case. He was held for eight months at a sprawling and deeply troubled tent detention camp in El Paso, Texas — which has seen a measles outbreak and detainee deaths, including one ruled a homicide — before a federal judge found his detention was illegal and ordered him released. DHS did not respond to a question about the center.

Another teenager named Carlos from Guatemala said in an interview that he was detained on his way to work at a car wash in Rockland County, New York, when he was 18, despite having been granted SIJ and deferred action. He was flown over 1,000 miles to a detention facility in Louisiana, though not the same one as Chavez. Carlos asked to be identified only by his first name because of his ongoing immigration case.

After his arrest, he said, "I was just thinking that I would never see my family again." Carlos was held for more than two months before a federal judge set him free.

The DHS spokesperson did not answer questions about any individual cases. They said federal court rulings against the administration "should come as no surprise," since "many activist judges have attempted to thwart President Trump from fulfilling the American people's mandate."

'I had so many plans'

Six months into his detention, Chavez is on his own. He was ordered deported but is appealing the decision and filed a habeas petition.

Della Valle has been released, thanks to his wife's outspoken advocacy. His release was bittersweet for Chavez. But Della Valle has not forgotten him.

Della Valle and his wife, Angela Della Valle, have helped Chavez's sister, Mayuri Chavez, to pay off his outstanding traffic tickets and prepare his defense. The couple started a letter-writing campaign for him. They've passed out flyers with a picture of a chair Chavez made in carpentry class, asking people to color it in and send him messages of encouragement.

Della Valle said he feels pangs of guilt about leaving Chavez behind. He still speaks to Chavez most days and tries to keep the teen's spirits up, but worries his words don't carry the same weight now that he's out. Della Valle tries to convince himself that Chavez will be OK, saying, "I think me being out might be good for him because he knows that there's hope."

Meanwhile, Chavez has been moved to different cells multiple times. One had only a single functional shower for dozens of men. The video call system often malfunctioned. Someone stole his small notebook, where he had carefully written down all the telephone numbers of the people he was in touch with outside. One night he dreamt he was free. When he woke up and realized he was still in detention, he panicked and had trouble breathing.

He said he has been trying to keep up the routine he started when Della Valle was there, but each passing week makes it harder.

In a series of interviews from detention, Chavez worried about losing half his junior year of high school. He missed a required English test and a deadline to turn in a history project, and now that the school year is over, he is unclear if he will be able to make the assignments up to be able to graduate on time. His sister spent a lot of money to get him braces, and without regular adjustments he worries it will all be for nothing. He missed the birth of his new nephew, and he is unsure if he will be able to meet him.

"I had so many plans," he said, "but now everything is ruined."

This story was originally produced by Minnesota Reformer, 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.

Mica Rosenberg is an investigative reporter on ProPublica's national desk focusing on immigration.

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What's a professional graduate degree? Loan confusion reigns amid legal battle.

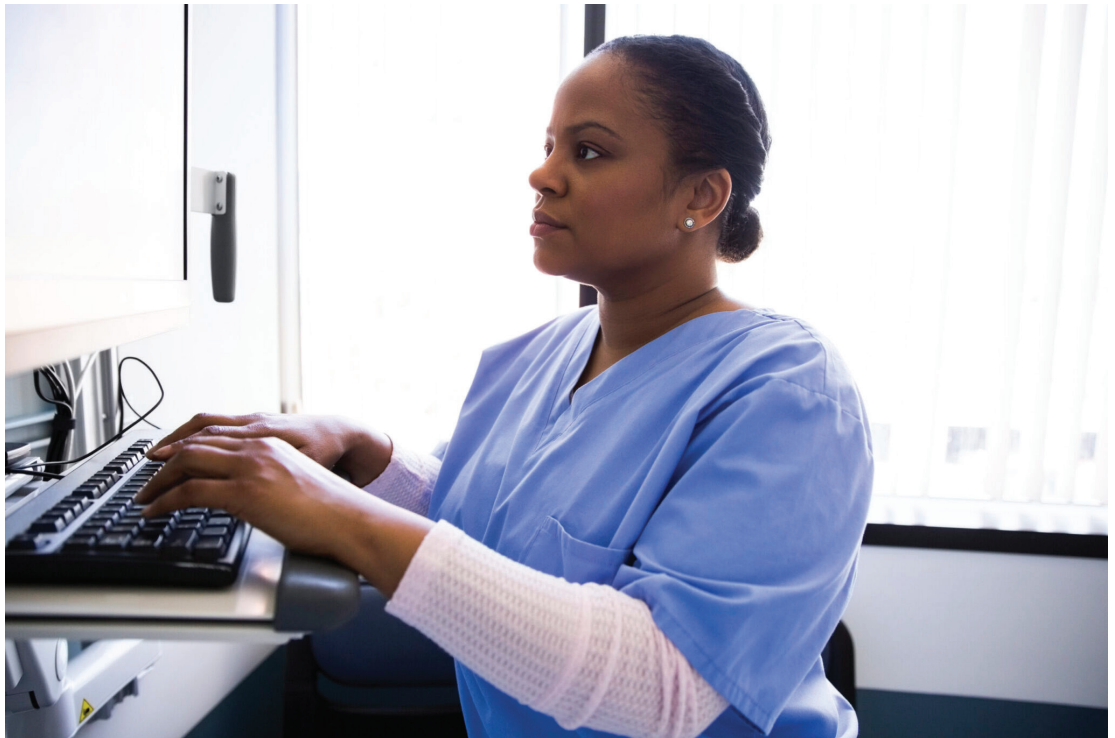
BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — Students pursuing several advanced degree programs can now access higher loan caps, but the temporary relief has ushered in a wave of uncertainty amid an ongoing legal battle.

Graduate-level programs such as nursing, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology are, for now, considered "professional" degrees by the U.S. Department of Education after a court order in late June halted the agency's new "professional" definition while a legal challenge unfolds.

That definition had limited the number of advanced degrees eligible for higher annual and lifetime loan limits to just 11 fields, while excluding several programs, such as nursing.

In response to U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell's interim ruling, the department temporarily expanded the list of degrees considered "professional" to 29 fields, per guidance given to institutions.



Graduate-level programs such as nursing are, for now, considered "professional" degrees by the U.S. Department of Education after a court order in late June halted the agency's new "professional" definition while a legal challenge unfolds. (Photo by Getty Images)

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Pushback from Trump administration

But the Education Department said it was confident its definition is "lawful" and vowed to keep defending the regulations.

The agency also stressed in its guidance that the temporary "professional" designations "are provided solely to facilitate implementation of the Court's order and may change as litigation in the case proceeds."

A department spokesperson, speaking on background, declined to comment on whether the department would appeal the ruling.

The department said in its guidance that while the case continues, institutions may wish to consider limiting loan amounts to the graduate-level caps for programs temporarily deemed "professional" in an effort to "mitigate potential disruption to student borrowers resulting from changes in program classification that may arise from the ongoing litigation."

The programs on the expanded list from the department include: veterinary medicine; law; divinity/ministry; rabbinical studies; clinical psychology; counseling psychology; school psychology; clinical child psychology; health/medical psychology; family psychology; forensic psychology; clinical, counseling and applied psychology; chiropractic; audiology; speech-language pathology; dentistry; anesthesiologist assistant; physician associate/assistant; athletic training; medicine; osteopathic medicine; podiatry; optometry; pharmacy; occupational therapy; physical therapy; registered nursing; nurse anesthetist; and nursing practice.

On the flip side, the department identified several programs that may have been considered "professional" prior to the court's ruling but no longer carry the status while the court order is in place, such as theology, pharmaceutical sciences, environmental psychology, and clinical and industrial drug development.

Schools 'not sure what to do'

Denise Morelli, of counsel at Sligo Law Group, a firm made up of former Education Department attorneys, said the department's late June guidance lacks clarity, especially in spelling out any repercussions for schools and students if the agency prevails in court and can keep its "professional" degree definition.

"I do think that has an impact on schools and students because schools are, kind of, not sure what to do because now ... these people in these programs are allowed to have the higher loans, according to the department, but the department's not saying they can keep them," said Morelli, a former attorney for the Office of the General Counsel at the department.

"You could be partway through the program, the department prevails, now the student has to get their loan amount cut, and it could also affect their annual limits, so it puts both students and schools in a very precarious position right now," she added.

Student loan system overhaul

The new definition is part of President Donald Trump's administration's sweeping overhaul of the federal student loan system stemming from the GOP's 2025 "big, beautiful" law. Most provisions in the overhaul took effect July 1.

Part of the regulations axed a program allowing for unlimited borrowing for graduate and professional students and set new caps on federal student loans, with much different limits based on whether a degree is deemed "professional."

Now, graduate student loans face a \$20,500 annual cap and \$100,000 lifetime limit. Professional student loans are subject to a \$50,000 yearly limit and \$200,000 aggregate cap.

Lawsuits crop up

The department's new "professional" degree definition prompted a handful of legal challenges against the administration, including the suit that sparked Howell's June order.

That case stems from a pair of combined challenges brought by a total of eight groups representing people in fields outside of the department's new "professional" definition.

One of the lawsuits was brought in May by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners; the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners; the American Association of Colleges of Nursing; the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health; the National Education Association; and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

The PA Education Association and the American Academy of Physician Associates filed the other lawsuit in June.

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

Smithsonian rejects Trump 'anti-American' charge, noting nonpartisan history

BY AMELIA TWYMAN

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's latest attack on the Smithsonian Institution represents an attempt to replace a shared American history with his own ideology, academics said as the Smithsonian defended its long-standing position as a nonpartisan actor.

A July 4 White House report accused the Smithsonian Institution and its National Museum of American History of promoting what it called a "radical, activist ideology" that downplayed U.S. achievements and promoted injustices related to race, gender and sexual identity.

But the report does not advocate for a neutral presentation of history, said Asim Ali, an American studies professor at the University of Maryland. Instead, the report's authors are promoting their own vision of American history that downplays the country's shortcomings to promote national pride, Ali said.

"The report frames what the National Museum of American History is doing as being ideologically and politically motivated," Ali said. "But what it is actually saying in the first several pages is that it should be following a different ideology — one that is focused on what the authors of the report want to see."

A spokesperson for the Smithsonian, a constellation of museums largely funded by the federal government, said the museum had a nearly two-century track record of nonpartisan service.

"For more than 180 years, the Smithsonian has served the American public with nonpartisan and independent scholarship, and we remain committed to doing so," the spokesperson wrote in a statement to States Newsroom.

Lonnie G. Bunch III, the secretary of the Smithsonian, was more forceful in an internal email, according to a July 8 Washington Post article.

His email to employees said the White House report was "not a fair characterization of the work and totality of the National Museum of American History," according to the Post.



The National Museum of American History sits on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy National Museum of American History)

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'Ideological capture'

The scathing 162-page report published by the White House Domestic Policy Council represents the latest push in a broader Trump effort to restructure some of the nation's hallmark cultural and artistic institutions to hew more closely to the nationalistic vision that animates his MAGA movement, American University history professor Pamela Nadell said.

It alleges the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History has "explicitly adopted an ideological framework that no longer treats the American story as a shared national inheritance to be taught or celebrated," instead painting the country in a "problematic" light with "thinly veiled anti-Americanism."

"This ideological capture has moved the Museum's mission away from straightforward historical education and scholarship toward an extreme political activism that seeks to transform our country," the report said.

Struggle to define history

Ali said he thinks the report's introduction reads like "propaganda" due to its focus on ideology and disregard of the contributions of academics and researchers.

Nadell also said the Trump administration is trying to get the Smithsonian — along with other cultural and educational institutions across the country — to conform to a certain "patriotic, heroic narrative."

She said she disagreed with the report's attempts to deemphasize flawed parts of America's story that are "essential to tell the complete history of the nation."

The White House report also has its defenders, who agree with Trump that U.S. educational and cultural institutions ought to show the country's history in a more positive light.

U.S. Sen. Jim Banks, an Indiana Republican who introduced a bill to codify a 2025 Trump executive order on the presentation of U.S. history, said in a social media post Tuesday that the White House was right to criticize the National Museum of American History.

"The Museum of *American* History has no major exhibits dedicated to *America's* founding," the senator wrote. "Instead, it focuses on 'social justice' and 'decolonization.' This is wrong."

'Woke' institutions

The Domestic Policy Council, which is led by former Trump campaign speechwriter Vince Haley, accused museum leadership of advancing personal ideological agendas that contradict the institution's founding patriotic principles.

The language used in the White House report echoes arguments the second Trump administration has made against academic and cultural institutions the president has deemed too culturally liberal or "woke."

Last year, less than one month after he assumed office, Trump named himself chairman of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and took control of much of the center's programming.

He has also ordered colleges and universities to make changes to their diversity, equity and inclusion-related programs and threatened to withhold federal funding if they did not comply.

And the July 4 report is not the first move the Trump administration has made against the Smithsonian Institution. The president issued a March 2025 executive order to "restore the Smithsonian Institution to its rightful place as a symbol of inspiration and American greatness" and get rid of any "improper ideology."

Then, beginning in August of last year, he launched an investigation into exhibitions and materials from eight of the Smithsonian's 21 museums.

Constructive criticism OK

Andrew Taylor, an associate professor of arts management at American University, said the Smithsonian should not be immune from criticism.

"I think anybody and everybody in the country has the right to hold the Smithsonian accountable and to make their best case for the things they're concerned about," he said. "That's fine, that's harmless and it's useful."

But, he added, the White House's critique seemed more designed to disrupt an honest public accounting of the nation's story.

"It feels like the report is intended to change what we consider to be our shared history, without actually going through the process of knowing what that should be," he said.

Amelia Twyman is an intern at States Newsroom's Washington bureau. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she now studies journalism and creative writing at the University of Maryland. She works as an assistant news editor at the university's independent student newspaper, The Diamondback. Amelia is set to graduate in 2028.

Trump plan to overhaul historic D.C. golf course troubles Maryland, Virginia senators

BY SAM GAUNTT

WASHINGTON — Four senators from Maryland and Virginia, all Democrats, said Thursday they have sent a letter to the Department of the Interior, demanding answers on the Trump administration's plan to redevelop the East Potomac Golf Links.

The senators had sent a similar letter in January with a list of questions, but wrote in their new correspondence that they had yet to receive a response. The letter was signed by Sens. Angela Alsobrooks, Chris Van Hollen, Tim Kaine and Mark Warner.

The four had said they had "serious concerns" that the Trump administration prematurely canceled the lease held by the National Links Trust, a nonprofit that managed the East Potomac Golf Links, Langston Golf Course and the Rock Creek Park Golf Course — all located on municipal property.

Though the Trump administration and the nonprofit reached a deal in May that would allow it to continue operating the Langston and Rock Creek courses, President Donald Trump has plowed forward with his plans to transform the East Potomac Golf Links into a championship-level course, which the senators wrote could impact its affordability and accessibility for everyday users.

"The municipal golf courses of Washington, D.C. are public assets with deep historical, recreational, and community value," the senators wrote. "Decisions affecting their future, and the health and safety of those who use them, must be guided by law, transparency, and fidelity to the public trust."

Senators demand 'transparent plan'

In their letter, the senators said that Congress, which has oversight over Washington, D.C., has not been informed of any of the project's details, such as its funding, scope, expected period of disruption, or how it will impact current users.

"A public commitment to preserve access is welcome, but it is not a substitute for a transparent plan



President Donald Trump tours East Potomac Golf Links on June 28, 2026 in Washington, D.C. Trump has announced a plan to renovate the golf course. (Photo by Aaron Schwartz/Getty Photos)

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that ensures East Potomac Park remains a genuinely affordable municipal golf course and public parkland for residents of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia,” they wrote.

They asked that, by July 20, the department answer a list of eight questions, which include how it plans to preserve the course’s affordability, its plans to protect historic cherry trees located in East Potomac Park and its compliance with federal environmental and public health regulations.

The National Park Service wrote in a statement to States Newsroom that it does not comment on congressional correspondence, but added that it takes them “seriously and carefully reviews each matter.”

The Department of Interior did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

‘Old and run down’

The East Potomac Golf Links project comes amid Trump’s plans to transform or update many of the district’s iconic landmarks. Among them are the ballroom planned to replace the White House’s former East Wing, the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool renovations and even a 250-foot triumphal arch.

In a post on Truth Social last month, Trump described the course as “old and run down” and “virtually unplayable.” He said that the new course, designed by Tom Fazio, who has also designed several of Trump’s own golf courses, will be “one of the Greatest Golf Courses anywhere in the World.”

While Trump said the planned course will remain open to the public, it will also be able to host major golfing events, such as the U.S. Open or the PGA Championship.

According to Trump, construction work on the updated course will begin Sept. 1.

Local concern

The redevelopment has drawn scrutiny from some city residents and preservation groups, including the D.C. Preservation League, which filed a suit alongside two local golfers against the Interior Department in February challenging the plan.

In their initial filing, the league argued that the dramatic transformation would threaten the course’s current status as a more affordable and accessible option for local residents, pricing out longtime players.

They further argued that the redevelopment has failed to follow federal environmental protection and historic preservation laws, as soil taken from the demolition site of the White House’s East Wing was dumped in the park last year without consideration of the impact it would have or testing for harmful pollutants.

In a response, the Interior Department said that it did in fact test the dumped soil before it arrived at the course.

But at a hearing last week, Judge Ana C. Reyes ordered the Interior Department to provide more specific information about the administration’s timeline for construction and actual redevelopment plans.

The department has a deadline of July 17 to provide the information.

Sam Gauntt is an intern at States Newsroom’s Washington bureau through the Dow Jones News Fund internship program. He is a senior journalism major at the University of Maryland and editor in chief of The Diamondback, the university’s independent student newspaper. He previously interned with Maryland Matters, an affiliate of States Newsroom.

US Olympian canoeist pleads not guilty to charges of damaging Reflecting Pool

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The former U.S Olympian charged with damaging a section of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool pleaded not guilty during a brief court hearing Thursday and was released on his own recognizance.

D.C. Superior Court Associate Judge Carmen Guerricagoitia McLean, who is presiding over the felony case against David C. Hearn, scheduled a status hearing for Aug. 5. McLean was nominated by President Barack Obama and, when that nomination expired, by President Donald Trump.

Mary L. Dohrmann, senior counsel at the Washington Litigation Group and a member of Hearn’s legal team, said during the arraignment hearing that he is an “upstanding citizen and member of the community”

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Norm Eisen, an attorney with the Democracy Defenders Fund, speaks outside District of Columbia Superior Court after an arraignment hearing for David C. Hearn, center, on felony charges of destruction of property of \$1,000 or more. At left is Mary C. Dohrmann, senior counsel at the Washington Litigation Group and another member of Hearn's legal team. (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

Fund and a member of Hearn's legal team, said "every American should be alarmed about this prosecution." "This indictment reflects the administration's effort to scapegoat Davey and to shift blame for their own failures," Eisen said.

Federal prosecutors, he said, should never have charged Hearn.

"It is not a crime to touch the Reflecting Pool, to touch water in the United States of America," Eisen said.

Maryland Democratic U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, in whose congressional district Hearn resides, wrote in a statement released during the hearing that "Hearn would never desecrate a federal building or landmark by writing his name on it or affixing his name illegally to it or engaging in any other kind of political graffiti, vandalism or delinquency."

"I hope—and will do everything I can to guarantee—that Davey gets true due process and a fair trial on these absurdly trumped-up charges," Raskin added. "It is only a matter of time before an impartial judge and jury recognize that this case has been built on a Kafkaesque arrest and Orwellian charges."

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.

and three-time Olympian canoeist who regularly represents the United States in international competitions.

Dohrmann said it would be a "waste of the court's resources to impose any conditions" on Hearn ahead of a future trial.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Reddington said prosecutors have "a lot of evidence" in the case and that he wanted the status hearing to be scheduled before a trial. He later said the government wants to "quickly" share its evidence with Hearn's legal team as part of the required discovery process.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro charged Hearn, of Bethesda, Maryland, with destruction of property of more than \$1,000 for allegedly vandalizing the newly refinished Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool on June 19. Trump, who has closely overseen the multi-million-dollar renovation of the Reflecting Pool, has blamed vandals for damage to it.

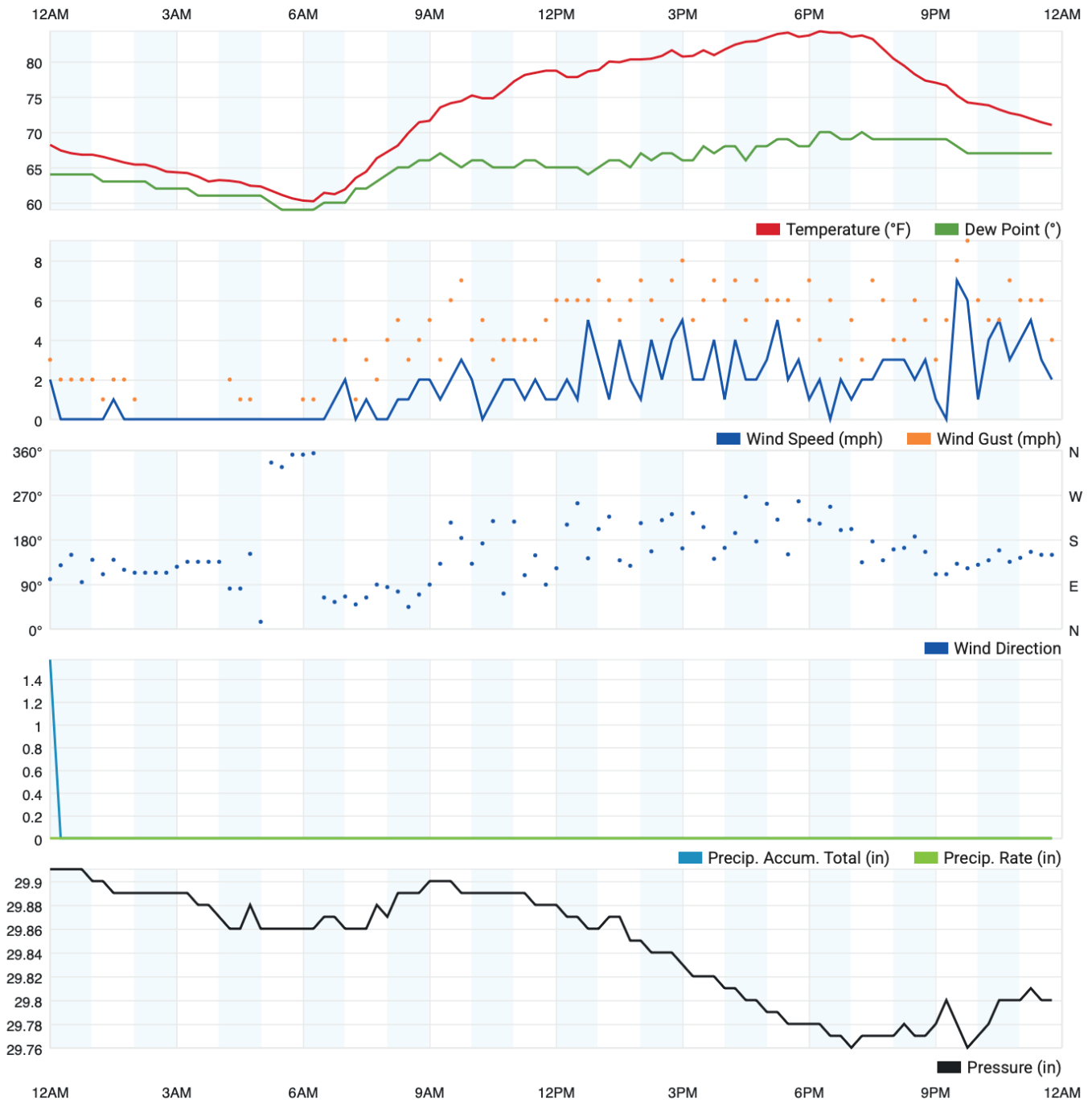
During a brief press conference outside the D.C. Superior Court Building after the hearing, Norm Eisen, co-founder and executive chair of Democracy Defenders

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 9, 2026



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Today



High: 92 °F

Hot

Tonight



Low: 66 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 95 °F

Hot

Saturday Night



Low: 70 °F

Clear

Sunday



High: 100 °F

Hot

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

**This afternoon
through the evening**

PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL
of 1" in diameter



DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS
of 60 mph

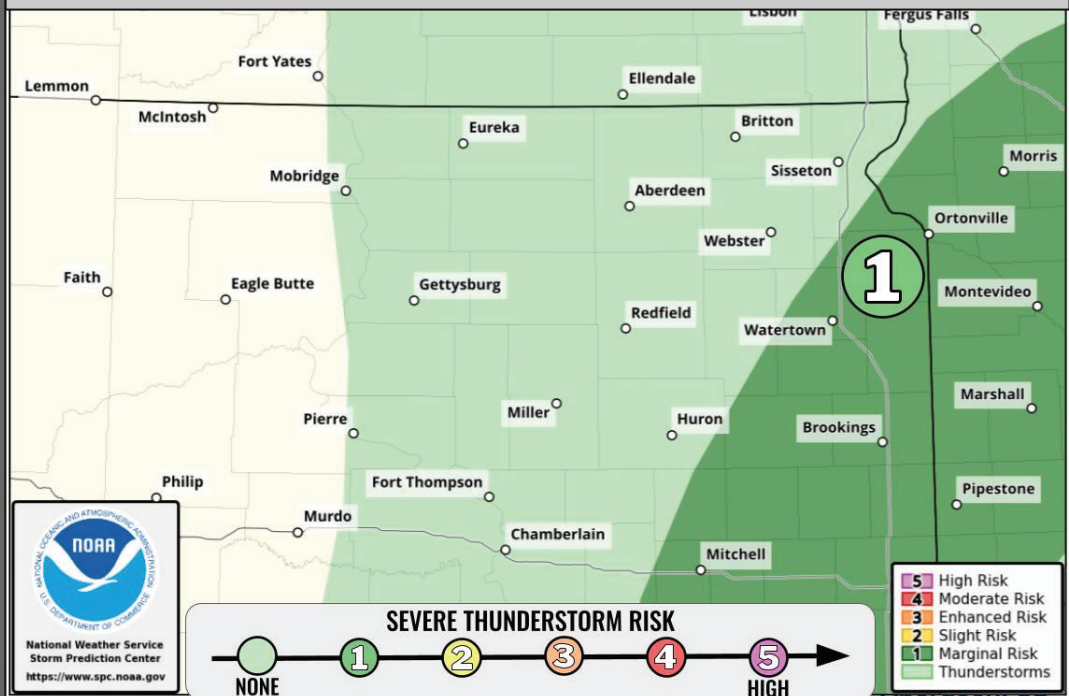
SECONDARY THREATS



HEAVY
RAINFALL

NWS
Aberdeen, SD

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Today



Isolated to scattered thunderstorms are possible over portions of northeastern SD through west central MN this afternoon and evening. There is an isolated risk (level 1/5) for severe storms for this area with the main threats being large hail of 1" in diameter and 60 mph wind gusts. Heavy rain is also possible.

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Warming Trend Starting Today

July 10, 2026
3:54 AM

Hottest days will be Sunday and Monday

Key Messages

- A warming trend expected today **with the hottest days being Sunday through Tuesday.**
- **Temperatures:** Upper 80s to mid 90s today, 90s Saturday, and upper 90s to as high as 105 Sunday and Monday.
- **Dewpoints:** Upper 50s to the lower 70s, warmest across west central MN.
- Widespread heat indices in the mid 90s to as high as 105 both Sunday and Monday afternoon.
- ***This heat may cause widespread heat related impacts particularly for those without adequate cooling and those sensitive to heat!***



Maximum Heat Index (°F) Forecast

	7/10 Fri	7/11 Sat	7/12 Sun	7/13 Mon	7/14 Tue	HeatIndex Max
Aberdeen	96	100	105	104	97	105
Britton	93	96	100	98	92	100
Brookings	90	91	94	94	95	95
Chamberlain	95	99	103	102	100	103
Clark	89	91	96	95	93	96
Eagle Butte	91	96	101	100	97	101
Ellendale	93	98	104	102	93	104
Eureka	91	95	101	101	93	101
Gettysburg	92	95	101	100	98	101
Huron	93	94	98	97	99	99
Kennebec	94	97	102	102	100	102
McIntosh	89	95	102	101	95	102
Milbank	92	97	101	99	95	101
Miller	93	95	99	97	98	99
Mobridge	94	98	104	103	98	104
Murdo	91	95	100	100	99	100
Pierre	95	100	105	105	101	105
Redfield	95	96	101	100	99	101
Sisseton	93	97	102	101	94	102
Watertown	93	96	99	98	94	99
Webster	90	94	97	96	92	97
Wheaton	91	96	103	102	94	103

A warming trend starts today with high temperatures potentially reaching the upper 90s into the lower 100s Sunday through Tuesday. This level of heat may cause widespread heat related impacts particularly for those without adequate cooling and those sensitive to heat.



Maximum Heat Risk Forecast

July 10, 2026
3:58 AM CDT

- **Heat Index Values:** Topping out Sunday through Tuesday 95-105F.
- Multiple days of **Major** to **Extreme** HeatRisk **Sunday through Tuesday** could lead to serious health problems and heat-related illnesses!

Little to no risk from expected heat.
Minor - Primarily affects those who are extremely sensitive to heat and without cooling/hydration.
Moderate - Affects those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without cooling/hydration, and some health systems and industries.
Major - Affects anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems and industries.
Extreme - Rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with no overnight relief affecting anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems, industries, and infrastructure.

Maximum HeatRisk Forecast

	7/10 Fri	7/11 Sat	7/12 Sun	7/13 Mon	7/14 Tue	HeatRisk Max
Aberdeen	2	3	3	3	3	3
Britton	1	2	3	3	2	3
Brookings	2	2	3	3	4	4
Chamberlain	1	2	3	3	3	3
Clark	2	2	3	3	3	3
Eagle Butte	2	2	3	4	4	4
Ellendale	1	3	3	3	3	3
Eureka	2	3	3	3	3	3
Gettysburg	2	2	3	4	4	4
Huron	1	2	3	3	3	3
Kennebec	1	2	2	2	2	2
McIntosh	1	2	3	3	2	3
Milbank	2	2	3	3	3	3
Miller	1	2	3	3	3	3
Mobridge	2	3	3	4	4	4
Murdo	1	2	2	3	3	3
Pierre	2	2	3	3	2	3
Redfield	2	2	3	4	4	4
Sisseton	1	2	3	3	3	3
Watertown	2	3	3	3	3	3
Webster	2	2	3	3	3	3
Wheaton	1	2	3	3	2	3

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 5:27 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:14 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 9:38 PM

Precip: 0.33

Today's Info

Record High: 114 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 1945

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.15

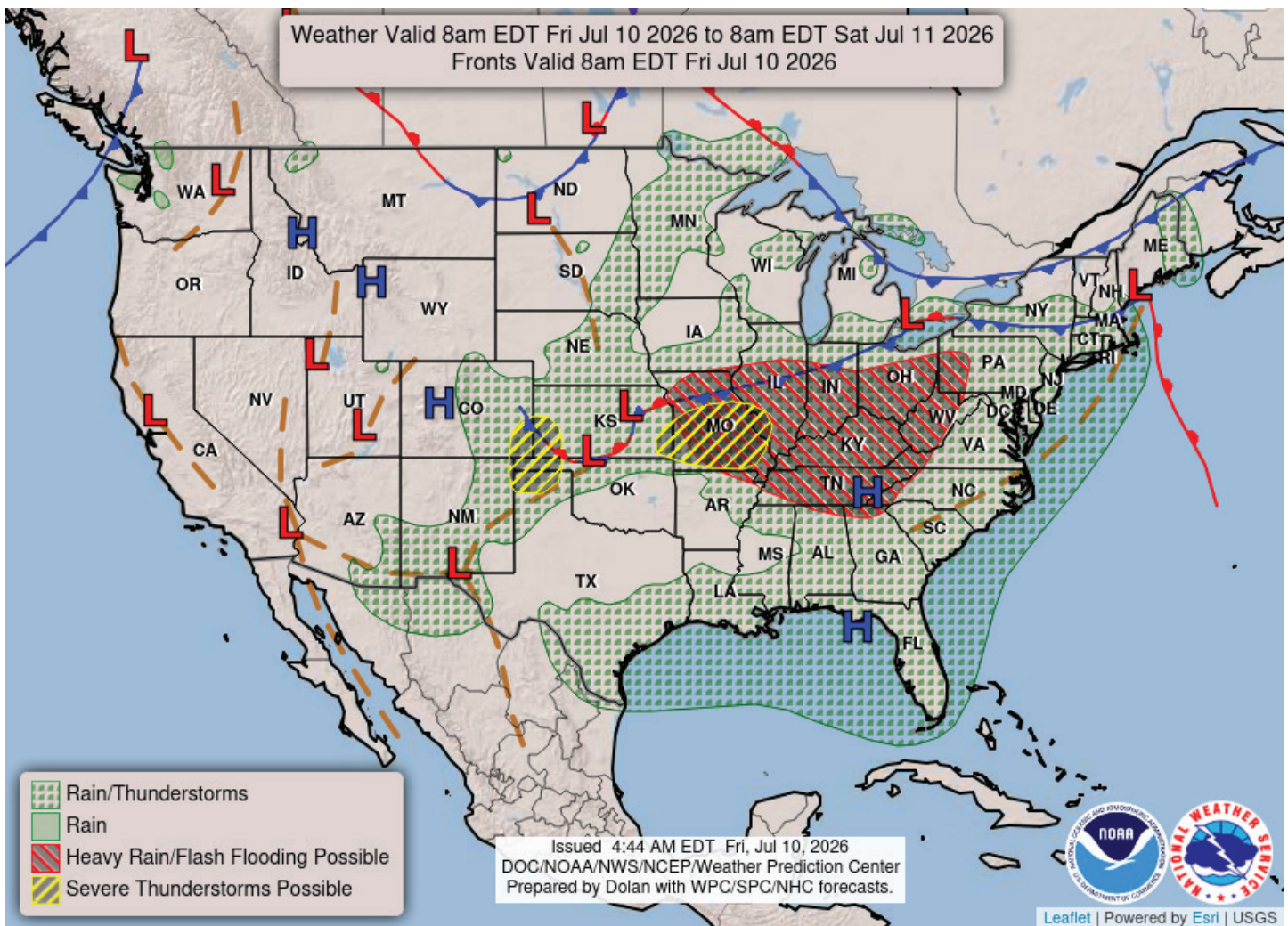
Precip to date in July.: 4.72

Average Precip to date: 12.01

Precip Year to Date: 14.19

Sunset Tonight: 9:21 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:54 am



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Today in Weather History

July 10, 1998: Flash flooding occurred from Keldron, in Corson County, and areas south, during the late afternoon and evening as a result of up to seven inches of rain that had fallen from slow-moving thunderstorms. Willow Creek and several small tributaries went out of their banks causing the inundation of low areas and county roads. Many county roads were damaged with one farmer losing several pigs and cows as a result of the flooding.

1887: A dam breaks in Zug, Switzerland, killing 70 people in their homes and destroying a large section of the town.

1911: The mercury hit 105 degrees at North Bridgton, Maine the hottest reading of record for Maine. North Bridgton also reached 105 degrees on the 4th of July in 1911.

1913: The mercury hit 134 degrees at Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, California, the hottest reading of record for the World. Sandstorm conditions accompanied the heat.

1926: At the Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, lightning struck one of the explosives storage structures during a thunderstorm and started a fire. As a result, several million pounds of explosives detonated over a period of 2–3 days. This explosion not only structural devastation, 187 of 200 buildings destroyed but military and civilian casualties as well. Close to one hundred are injured as explosion spreads havoc within a radius of 15 miles in New Jersey. Otto Dowling was in charge at the time and received a Distinguished Service Cross for his handling of the situation.

1936 — Afternoon highs of 112 degrees at Martinsburg, WV, 109 degrees at Cumberland, MD, and Frederick, MD, 110 degrees at Runyon, NJ, and 111 degrees at Phoenixville, PA, established all-time record highs for those four states. It was the hottest day of record for the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. (The Weather Channel)

1979 — The temperature at El Paso, TX, hit 112 degrees, an all-time record for that location. The next day was 110 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 — The temperature in downtown Kansas City, MO, hit 109 degrees, following a sultry overnight low of 89 degrees. The daily low of 89 degrees was the warmest of record for Kansas City, and overall it was the hottest July day of record. It was the seventh of a record seventeen consecutive days of 100 degree heat, and the mean temperature for the month of 90.2 degrees was also an all-time record for Kansas City.

1987 — An early morning thunderstorm in Minnesota produced wind gusts to 91 mph at Waseca. Later that day, thunderstorms in South Dakota produced wind gusts to 81 mph at Ipswitch, and baseball size hail near Hayes and Capa. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms brought welcome rains to parts of the central U.S., but produced severe weather along the New England coast, in the Great Lakes Region, in North Carolina, and in the Southern Plateau Region. Strong thunderstorm winds gusting to 80 mph at Bullfrog, UT, sank three boats on Lake Powell. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Severe thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes in the northeastern U.S. A powerful (F-4) tornado struck Hamden CT and New Haven, CT, causing 100 million dollars damage at Hamden, and another 20 million dollars damage around New Haven. Forty persons were injured in the tornado. Seventy persons were injured in a tornado which traveled from Watertown, CT, to Waterbury, CT, and another powerful (F-4) tornado touched down near Ames NY injuring twenty persons along its 43.5 mile track. It was the strongest tornado of record for eastern New York State. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2005 — Hurricane Dennis landed near Pensacola, Florida as a category 3 storm. Maximum sustained winds at the time of landfall were near 120 mph. There were nine hurricane-related fatalities in the U.S. and preliminary estimates of insured losses ranged from \$1 to \$1.5 billion.

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Daily Devotion

What Can We Learn From Disaster?

Within the disaster and in the aftermath, God is present and ready to restore.

Isaiah 55:8-9: 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Whenever disaster strikes, questions spring to mind: Why does the Lord let bad things happen? Where is He in the midst of suffering?

These are ancient questions—Job asked them, as did the psalmists, and believers through the ages have likewise wrestled with them. Today's passage reminds us that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours. This isn't dismissive—it's an acknowledgment that we live in a fallen world where natural laws operate, free will exists, and suffering touches everyone, both righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 5:45).

God is not the author of evil, nor does He orchestrate tragedy. Yet He is sovereign, which means nothing escapes His awareness or His purposes. This truth is at the heart of our faith: God grieves with us in our suffering even as He works redemptively within it. He doesn't always intervene, but He is present in disaster's aftermath, bringing comfort, strength, and restoration.

We must resist reducing God's ways to formulas we can understand. When we cannot grasp His purposes, we anchor ourselves in what Scripture reveals: His faithfulness, His presence within the suffering, and His ultimate victory over all evil (Revelation 21:4). His ways may be higher than ours, but His heart toward us is unmistakably good.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.09.26

2 15 22 54 58 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 42 Mins 12
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.07.26

2 31 35 36 63 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$604,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 27 Mins 11
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.26

17 26 31 32 37 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$32,860,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 42
Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.26

7 11 18 31 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$177,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 57
Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.26

6 27 33 44 69 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 26
Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.26

12 29 37 43 55 18

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$457,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 26
Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

China takes a page from SpaceX and recaptures the first stage of a rocket to reuse it

BEIJING (AP) — China successfully recaptured the first stage of a rocket after a launch on Friday in a breakthrough for the country's space program, state media said.

The first stage of a Long March-10B rocket separated from the second stage after liftoff and returned to a platform in the sea, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

It was the first time China recovered the first stage of a rocket. America's SpaceX has been doing so for several years to drive down launch costs by reusing the booster that helps lift the satellites or whatever the rocket is carrying into space.

The Long March rocket was launched from China's Hainan Island, a popular beach destination off the country's southern coast.

The rocket's reusable configuration can launch a payload of up to 16,000 kilograms (35,275 pounds) into what is called low Earth orbit, Xinhua said.

The maximum payload of the SpaceX Falcon 9 is 22,800 kilograms (50,265 pounds), according to the SpaceX website. The Falcon rockets transport astronauts and supplies to the International Space Station.

Many US Jewish adults have experienced assault or harassment over the past year, AP-NORC poll finds

By LINLEY SANDERS and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Jewish adults feel unsafe in the United States, a new AP-NORC poll finds, with a majority saying they feel less safe than they did before Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research points to how Jewish adults' attitudes toward their own personal safety have changed over a relatively short period as more Americans became critical of the United States' close alliance with Israel. The war in Gaza sparked U.S. protests over Israel's military actions against the Palestinians in Gaza, and coincided with an increase in violent attacks against U.S. Jewish communities.

The findings highlight the vulnerability that many Jewish adults in the U.S. feel as bipartisan support for Israel erodes and significant divides emerge within the Jewish community about what constitutes anti-semitism — particularly when it comes to protesting Israel.

A significant share of Jewish adults, about 3 in 10, say they or someone in their household has experienced physical assault, verbal abuse, online harassment or damaged property because of their Jewish background over the last year, according to the survey.

Hal Guberman, a 30-year-old in New Jersey, wears a kippah with some trepidation ever since a stranger in a passing car yelled a slur at him when he was walking down the street last year.

"That person, they don't know anything about me. They don't know my politics. They don't know my beliefs. They don't know my viewpoints," Guberman said. "But they saw me being visibly Jewish, and they made an opinion about me."

Jewish adults see prejudice against Jews as a serious problem, and many feel unsafe

About 6 in 10 Jewish adults say that prejudice against Jewish people is an "extremely" or "very" serious problem in the United States today, a view that is heightened among Jewish adults who say they are "extremely" or "very" emotionally attached to Israel.

About one-third of Jewish adults say they feel "very" or "somewhat" safe as a Jewish person in the U.S. today, while about one-third feel "very" or "somewhat" unsafe. The remaining roughly 3 in 10 say they feel neither safe nor unsafe. Those with a close connection to Israel or who identify as Jewish by religion — instead of saying they are religiously unaffiliated with a cultural, ethnic or family connection to

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Judaism — are more likely to feel threatened in the current environment.

About 6 in 10 Jewish adults say they feel “less safe” as a Jewish person in the U.S. than they did before Hamas’ 2023 attack, including about 7 in 10 of those who are religiously Jewish. About one-third of Jewish adults say they feel “about as safe” and very few feel safer.

Erin Baskin, a 36-year-old in Pennsylvania, said the Oct. 7 attacks didn’t change how safe she feels because she had her own experiences with prejudice before then.

“I’ve always grown up with antisemitism,” she said. “Among the rural community I’m in, they conflate Judaism with Zionism all the time. Unfortunately, that’s kind of been my experience. It’s nothing new.”

Some Jewish adults have grown wary of outwardly identifying themselves as Jewish following the Oct. 7 attacks, the survey found.

About 4 in 10 Jewish adults say they are “less likely” to wear, carry or display things that might identify them as a Jewish person than they were before Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack. About half say they are “about as likely” and about 1 in 10 say they are “more likely.”

Caitlin Rosendorn, a 24-year-old in Illinois, said she used to wear a Star of David necklace, but she worries now that wearing it could give people the incorrect impression that she supports Israel’s attacks against the Palestinian people.

“I don’t want to wear a Star of David to work if that’s going to alienate somebody who sees the Star of David as a symbol of Israel as opposed to a symbol of Judaism,” she said. “I don’t want people to get the wrong idea about my views.”

Many Jews report physical assault, property damage or harassment

About 1 in 10 Jewish adults say that in the past year, they or someone in their household has been physically assaulted. A similar share had property damaged or destroyed specifically because of their Jewish background.

About 2 in 10 Jewish adults say they or someone in their household has been called a slur, threatened, verbally harassed or verbally abused. Similarly, about 2 in 10 say they experienced online harassment or cyberbullying. Overall, about 3 in 10 of Jewish adults say that they or someone in their household has experienced at least one of these incidents because of their Jewish background.

Jewish adults who attend religious services at least once a month are much likelier than Jewish adults overall to say they or someone in their household has experienced attacks or harassment over their Jewish background — a finding that comes as there have been several targeted attacks on Jewish religious spaces in recent years.

Slightly less than half of Jewish adults who frequently attend religious services say they or someone in their household has faced verbal harassment. A similar share experienced online harassment, and about one-quarter have dealt with physical attacks or property damage.

Jon Kessler, 38, of California, who grew up in the Conservative tradition of Judaism, believes non-Jews might be surprised at the extent to which Jewish adults have to consider security at community events.

“Most people when they go to church don’t have armed security, but every synagogue has an armed security guard,” Kessler said. “My son’s Jewish daycare has an armed security guard.”

Jews are divided over whether protesting Israel is a form of antisemitism

Protests surrounding speakers tied to Israel — whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s address to Congress or college speakers seen as either too supportive or too critical of the country — became more common following the backlash over Israel’s war in Gaza.

Jewish adults, in particular, are divided over whether protesting an event related to Israel is an act of prejudice against Jewish people generally. About half of Jewish adults say anti-Israel protests are not a form of antisemitism, but roughly 4 in 10 say they are.

Many anti-Israel protests have been tied to criticism of Israel’s military action in Gaza. More than 73,000 Palestinians have died in Gaza since Israel retaliated against Hamas’ attack in 2023, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between civilian and militant deaths.

About two-thirds of Jewish adults say criticizing Israel for its military actions is not a form of antisemitism, but Jewish adults with a close emotional connection to Israel are more likely to say that criticism

of Israel's military actions is antisemitic. That said, relatively few Jewish adults say it's antisemitic just to criticize Israel for "any reason."

Americans overall are less likely to say it's antisemitic to protest an event that is supportive of Israel, or to criticize Israel's military actions — but they are also much less likely to have an opinion.

Jewish adults are more unified in deeming some actions as definitively antisemitic. The overwhelming majority say vandalizing synagogues or Jewish-owned businesses because of Israel's actions is antisemitism. The same goes for denying the reality or scope of the Holocaust, putting responsibility for Israel's actions on Jewish people in the United States, saying Israel shouldn't exist as a Jewish state or claiming American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the U.S.

There is less consensus among non-Jewish U.S. adults on whether some of these actions constitute antisemitism, with many saying they're not sure.

Amanda Goldsmith, 53, who lives in Chicago, believes people have become too comfortable expressing antisemitic views online — something that she previously thought only existed in extremist spaces.

"Now, it seems like there was an undercurrent, and it's a free-for-all, and everyone is free to say what they want," she said. "The freedom with which people say horrible things about Jewish people is appalling."

Seafarers attacked in the Strait of Hormuz sue shipping company in Thailand

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and ANTON L. DELGADO Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Three former crew members of a Thai cargo ship struck in the Strait of Hormuz in March filed a lawsuit Friday against the vessel's operator over labor rights violations and unfair dismissal.

The ship, the Mayuree Naree, was hit by a projectile north of Oman on March 11, killing three people. The remaining 20 crew members were rescued and returned to Thailand about a week later.

Former crew members Panithi Tumkaew, Noppadon Wongsuvan and Surades Manpuen filed the lawsuit against Precious Shipping Co. as well as two affiliated companies and the ship's captain.

The lawsuit alleges that the defendants endangered their lives by sailing through the strait despite the security risks, according to their lawyer Kunpat Singhathong.

Kunpat said the three men were also dismissed before the completion of their nine-month employment contracts after the attack rendered the ship inoperable. He said they received compensation equivalent to two months' salary.

The compensation was inadequate because they have since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, leaving them unable to continue working as sailors for the foreseeable future, he said.

"We tried to negotiate with the company, but it denied responsibility, so we believe the matter should be brought to the court," Kunpat said before filing the case with the Central Labor Court in Bangkok.

He declined to identify the amount of compensation they are seeking, only that it would be over a million baht (\$30,000) per person.

Panithi, who said he had worked for Precious Shipping for more than a decade, said his wife encouraged him to seek medical treatment after noticing changes in his behavior.

"When there are loud noises, I'll get startled," he said. "I can't work now, and I have to take medication."

Precious Shipping did not respond to requests for comment.

The remains of the three crew members killed in the attack were repatriated to Thailand earlier this month.

In a statement on July 3, Precious Shipping thanked everyone involved in the repatriation process and expressed its condolences to the victims' families. The company said it "remains committed to providing full assistance, care, and support to bereaved families throughout this difficult time."

On Thursday, the United States launched new airstrikes against Iran, which responded by targeting American allies in the Middle East. The exchange of fire threatens an interim deal intended to help end the Iran war.

The conflict has choked off the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for about a fifth of global trade in crude oil and liquefied natural gas. Most of this was bound for Asia, which has struggled with a continent-

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wide energy shock since the war began on Feb. 28.

The safety of stranded seafarers in the Persian Gulf has been a source of concern among Asian nations — like India, the Philippines and Thailand — whose citizens make up a significant portion of ship crews.

"This is not simply a matter of shipping statistics," said Arsenio Dominguez, the secretary-general of the United Nations' International Maritime Organization in a statement Wednesday. "Behind the figures are seafarers, and in some cases their families, who continue to bear the human cost of this conflict."

US and Iran exchange intensifying fire across Mideast, threatening ceasefire deal

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States launched new airstrikes against Iran early Thursday, and Tehran responded by targeting U.S.-allied Mideast countries in an exchange of fire that threatened an interim deal intended to help end the war in the Middle East.

Back-and-forth attacks, including a day earlier, have repeatedly threatened the ceasefire. But Thursday's appeared bigger all around, with sirens sounding at least three times in Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters, and missiles targeting Kuwait and Qatar.

Sirens sounded Thursday afternoon in Jordan as well, where the U.S. has stationed troops and aircraft.

An Iranian official accused the U.S. of launching an airstrike later Thursday targeting the area around Iran's sole nuclear power plant, and other explosions were reported elsewhere in the country during the afternoon.

Early Friday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was laid to rest in his hometown of Mashhad after days of public mourning. Khamenei was killed in the opening salvos of the Iran war.

The strikes came hours after U.S. President Donald Trump said recent Iranian attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz signaled the end of a fragile ceasefire and threatened to escalate the conflict if they didn't stop. That raised concerns that the region could tip back into a war that would engulf several countries and could halt energy shipments through the strait that are crucial for the global economy.

In Iran, the two days of American airstrikes have killed at least 14 people and wounded another 78, Iran's Health Ministry said Thursday. Most were reportedly members of the armed forces.

In Kuwait, the military said falling debris wounded one person as the nation shot down three ballistic missiles, a cruise missile and 10 drones. Bahrain said it shot down incoming fire, without elaborating, and Jordanian government spokesperson Mohammad al-Momani said all incoming fire from Iran had been intercepted. Iranian state TV said the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard fired missiles at a U.S. base in Jordan.

There was no immediate word of damage in Qatar.

US strikes hit more targets

The U.S. military's Central Command said it hit 90 targets across Iran, releasing black-and-white footage of what appeared to be strikes on an airport runway and missile launchers.

The U.S. said the strikes were intended to "further degrade" Iran's ability "to threaten freedom of navigation" in the strait, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil and natural gas passed before the war began with U.S. and Israeli attacks on Feb. 28.

Traffic has picked up somewhat since a tentative deal last month included opening the waterway. Maritime data company Lloyd's List Intelligence said Thursday that preliminary data showed at least 576 ships passed through the strait in June, compared with 233 in May. More than 3,100 transited the strait in June 2025.

Iranian state media reported explosions in several locations, including Bushehr, home to Iran's nuclear power plant complex, and southern port cities. The state-run IRNA news agency quoted Ehsan Jahanian, a local official in Bushehr, as accusing the U.S. of striking near the plant around noon, hours after Central Command said it had ended its latest round of strikes. Asked for comment on Bushehr, Central Command referred to a press release that detailed targets but made no mention of the nuclear power plant.

Streets are jammed for Khamenei's final funeral procession

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For the first time since April, U.S. strikes also appeared to target Iranian bridges. State media reported a strike on a railway bridge in Iran's northeastern Golestan province, and the Revolutionary Guard said two bridges were attacked on the route to Mashhad, where tens of thousands of mourners thronged wide boulevards during the final funeral procession for Khamenei on Thursday.

People pressed forward to touch a vehicle carrying Khamenei's body. Many carried Iranian flags and images of the late leader or banners evoking Shiite Islam's long history of martyrs. Some signs called for the death of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Khamenei ruled Iran for nearly 37 years before being killed in the U.S. and Israeli airstrikes that started the war. The funeral processions began last Saturday, with authorities shutting down streets, airspace and daily life in Tehran and other cities as throngs commemorated the man who led Iran for decades with an iron fist while confronting the West.

Trump issues another warning to Iran if attacks on shipping happen again

After leaving a NATO summit in Turkey, Trump posted several videos on his social media site of what he said were explosions in Iran and issued another warning to the Islamic Republic.

"This is in retribution for yesterday's bombing of ships by Iran. If it happens again, it will get much worse!" Trump wrote Wednesday, a day after three tankers were attacked in the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump also renewed his past threats to hit Iran's civilian infrastructure, including electric and desalination plants, and to seize Kharg Island, through which some 90% of Iranian oil exports pass.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, a key negotiator in talks seeking a permanent end to the war, was defiant in a post on X on Thursday morning: "America still hasn't learned that bullying and breaking promises are no longer cost-free. Let me put it plainly: If you strike, you'll get hit."

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on Telegram that he spoke by phone with his Saudi, Turkish and Omani counterparts and with Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, who has been one of the main mediators in the war. The outreach suggested efforts may be underway to reduce tensions.

Talks on reaching a final deal were to begin after Khamenei's funeral

Trump said Wednesday that the interim ceasefire agreement was "over." He said he would allow negotiations to continue but thought negotiators were "wasting their time."

Negotiations to reach a final deal were due to start after the funeral for Khamenei.

The talks are meant to focus on the toughest matters, including fully reopening the strait and rolling back Tehran's disputed nuclear program.

China braces for a powerful typhoon after a week of deadly storms

BEIJING (AP) — A powerful typhoon was heading toward China's east coast Friday, the latest in a series of deadly storms that have already claimed 50 lives this week in two other parts of the country.

Typhoon Bavi, with maximum sustained winds of 162 kilometers (101 miles) per hour, was first expected to pass north of Taiwan, bringing heavy rains to the island of 23 million people from Friday night into Saturday.

Schools were closed Friday in Taipei, the island's capital, and fishing boats have been tied up close together in ports in northern Taiwan. Many flights to Japan, Hong Kong and other destinations have been canceled through Saturday, though some were still scheduled, Taiwan's Central News Agency said.

The typhoon's current northwest track would take it over some remote Japanese islands before passing to Taiwan's north on Saturday. It is forecast to make landfall Saturday night south of Shanghai, near the border between Fujian and Zhejiang provinces.

More than 17,000 people have been evacuated in Zhejiang and 170,000 rescue workers placed on standby, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Fujian has suspended some ferry routes because of strong winds and rough seas and called for fishing boats to return to port.

Bavi has weakened from supertyphoon strength earlier this week, when it brought violent winds to Saipan and other U.S. territories in the Pacific.

In southern China, authorities announced Thursday that 39 people had died in flooding from Tropical

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Storm Maysak, which drenched parts of the Guangxi region for days with record rainfall.

The rains breached reservoirs, including the dramatic collapse of part of a dam in Hengzhou that inundated a wide area with fast-flowing muddy water. The floods stranded people on the second and higher floors of buildings for days, many without power, until rescuers could reach them.

Another 11 people died in central China when severe thunderstorms and tornadoes wreaked havoc in Hubei province on Monday night.

Separately, a landslide killed 21 forestry workers in western China's Gansu province on Tuesday in a disaster that was not storm-related.

Lawyers for man charged with killing Charlie Kirk question reliability of evidence

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

PROVO, Utah (AP) — Lawyers for the man accused of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk plan to call a final witness on Friday as they try to raise doubts about the prosecution's case before it can go to trial.

A Utah judge is deciding whether prosecutors have enough evidence to put Tyler Robinson on trial on a charge of aggravated murder. Kirk, 31, was killed as he spoke to a crowd of thousands at Utah Valley University on Sept. 10.

One of Robinson's attorneys, Michael Burt, tried to inject uncertainty into the case Thursday by challenging the reliability of ballistics tests on a bullet fragment recovered from Kirk's body. Authorities sought to tie the fragment to the suspected murder weapon, but the results were inconclusive.

"Saying anything but inconclusive was inappropriate," said Samantha Karner with the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives.

Burt earlier in the week questioned the reliability of DNA evidence that investigators said linked Robinson to the scene. Experts say the science behind DNA testing is sound.

Robinson has not entered a plea. He turned himself in a day after the fatal shooting of Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump credited with helping galvanize young voters for the Republican in the 2024 election.

The defense said it would call a final witness to testify Friday, the final day of the weeklong preliminary hearing.

However, a decision from state District Judge Tony Graf won't come until after Sept. 1, when he scheduled oral arguments in the matter.

Prosecutors on Thursday aired portions of a recorded interview with Robinson's roommate, Lance Twiggs.

The day after Kirk was shot in the neck, Robinson allegedly told Twiggs "he wishes he hadn't done it," a recording played in court revealed.

Later that same day — and only about an hour before turning himself in — Robinson posted "it was me at UVU yesterday," in a chat room on the Discord social media platform, according to investigators and messages shown by prosecutors.

Defense attorneys unsuccessfully fought the public release of the statements from Twiggs and the chat room messages. They argued prosecutors would characterize the material as a confession, undermining Robinson's right to a fair trial.

Prosecutors contend the shooting endangered others at Kirk's campus event — an aggravating circumstance that could make the crime punishable by death under Utah law. Robinson also faces possible sentence enhancements based on claims by prosecutors that he targeted Kirk because of his political views.

Twiggs said in the April interview with prosecutors and investigators that Robinson sometimes talked about politics, including Trump. But Twiggs said he never heard Robinson talk about Kirk before the shooting. The defendant also did not talk much about gender issues or LGBTQ rights, Twiggs said.

Suspect in Charlie Kirk killing said 'he wishes he hadn't done it,' roommate says in video

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

PROVO, Utah (AP) — The defendant in Charlie Kirk's killing told his roommate "he wishes he hadn't done it" the day after the conservative activist was shot in the neck while speaking at Utah Valley University, a recording played in court revealed Thursday.

Lance Twiggs, who was also defendant Tyler Robinson's romantic partner, said in an interview with law enforcement that the teary interaction with Robinson happened in their apartment in southern Utah, more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) from where Kirk was shot.

Later that same day — and only about an hour before turning himself in — Robinson posted "it was me at UVU yesterday," in a chat room on the Discord instant messaging platform, according to investigators and messages shown by prosecutors.

Robinson is charged with aggravated murder and has not entered a plea. He turned himself in a day after the Sept. 10 shooting of Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump credited with helping galvanize young voters for the Republican in the 2024 election.

Ammunition found in the gun used to kill Kirk had engravings that included "Hey Facist! CATCH!" and "If you Read This, You Are GAY," according to prosecutors, who are seeking the death penalty.

Robinson appeared to furrow his brow and smirk when text messages he sent to Twiggs about the engraved bullets were displayed in the courtroom Thursday.

Robinson's family sat behind him, and his mom cried as the Discord messages were read aloud. She rubbed the shoulder of one of Robinson's brothers, who listened with his head bowed.

Defense attorneys unsuccessfully fought the public release of the statements from Twiggs and the chat room messages. They argued prosecutors would characterize the material as a confession, undermining Robinson's right to a fair trial.

After prolonged debate that included an attorney for Kirk's family arguing for the material to be publicly released, state District Judge Tony Graf allowed a redacted version of Twiggs' video interview to be played. Some parts were blacked out, with only audio.

Graf is weighing whether prosecutors have enough evidence to bring Robinson to trial. He won't rule until after both sides present arguments on Sept. 1.

Notes and text exchanges were shown in court

Robinson's attorneys have not commented on his guilt or innocence but have sought to get the death penalty taken off the table, so far unsuccessfully.

Defense attorney Michael Burt tried to inject doubt into the prosecution's case by challenging the reliability of ballistics tests on a bullet fragment recovered from Kirk's body. Authorities sought to tie the fragment to the suspected murder weapon, but the results were inconclusive.

"Saying anything but inconclusive was inappropriate," said Samantha Karner with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, a federal law enforcement agency.

The defense earlier in the week had questioned the reliability of DNA evidence that investigators said linked Robinson to the scene. Experts say the science behind DNA testing is sound.

Prosecutors allege Robinson confessed in a handwritten note to Twiggs that read: "I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk, and I took it." The note, shown in full for the first time Thursday, continued, "I wish we could have lived in a world where this did not feel necessary."

Robinson also allegedly sent a text to Twiggs saying he targeted Kirk because he "had enough of his hatred."

State Bureau of Investigation Agent Brian Davis recounted the messages exchanged between Twiggs and Robinson under questioning by a prosecutor Thursday. Included were texts from Robinson worrying about leaving fingerprints on a rifle that belonged to his grandfather, which authorities believe he used to shoot Kirk.

Twiggs spoke to authorities on Sept. 12 — two days after Kirk was assassinated while speaking to a crowd

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of thousands — and again on April 20, Davis said. He was given immunity for the statements, meaning what Twiggs said cannot be used against him in a potential criminal case.

Prosecutors contend the shooting endangered others at Kirk's campus event — an aggravating circumstance that could make the crime punishable by death under Utah law. Robinson also faces possible sentence enhancements based on claims by prosecutors that he targeted Kirk because of his political views.

Twiggs said in the April interview that Robinson sometimes talked about politics, including Trump. But Twiggs said he never heard Robinson talk about Kirk before the shooting. The defendant also did not talk much about LGBTQ rights, Twiggs testified.

Kirk's friends react to new evidence

Kirk's parents and widow, Erika, sat a few rows back from Robinson's family on Thursday. U.S. Sen. Mike Lee, a Utah Republican, also was in attendance.

Brandon Tatum, a conservative media personality and close friend of Kirk, said he was "shocked at how much relevant evidence" Twiggs' shared in his interview. He left court Thursday feeling confident about prosecutors' case but had mixed feelings about the judge's decision to hold off ruling until after a September hearing.

"I think the family's waited long enough, but I'd rather it be done right and done in confidence than for it to be hastily done the next day without being thoroughly, I guess, bulletproof," Tatum said.

Another conservative activist, Jack Posobiec, said he got emotional seeing photos of the bullet fragments that hit his friend. "But you have to push through that pain and push through all of that to be able to get justice," he said.

Investigators say Robinson went to a rooftop near where Kirk was speaking and shot him once in the neck while the activist was taking questions from a crowd of several thousand people. Kirk, 31, was declared dead after being taken to a hospital.

Who will replace Platner on the Maine ballot? These Democrats are raising their hands

By PATRICK WHITTLE and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Democrats in Maine began jockeying Thursday to become the new candidate for a pivotal U.S. Senate seat after progressive nominee Graham Platner announced he will withdraw from the race after a sexual assault allegation.

Democrats need to pick a candidate to replace Platner on the ballot by July 27, according to state law. Whoever is selected will have less than four months before facing longtime Republican Sen. Susan Collins in the general election. Potential candidates had already been teasing their interest before Platner, who denies the allegation, announced he intends to drop out. Platner is expected to file paperwork to formally withdraw on Monday, the deadline to do so.

But a growing number began formally launching their campaigns Thursday.

The Maine Democratic Party has said it will hold a nominating convention to choose the replacement. The party says the convention will involve hundreds of delegates from across the state, but how and when that'll take place remains unknown.

Maine is considered a key state for control of the narrowly divided Senate, and Democrats are desperate for a candidate capable of defeating Collins while President Donald Trump is broadly unpopular.

Gov. Janet Mills, who sought the nomination during the primary campaign and suspended her campaign in late April, has not indicated if she's interested in running.

These are some of the people who have shown interest in the Maine Senate race:

Troy Jackson

Jackson is Maine's former state Senate president. He unsuccessfully ran to be the Democratic nominee for governor earlier this year with the backing of Platner and U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders. Shortly after Platner said he would quit the Senate race, Jackson launched his campaign, arguing that Mainers want "a progressive fighter." Our Revolution, the organization founded by Sanders, has since said it would back Jackson, 58.

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Jackson released a statement with dozens of endorsements, many from current and former state and local officials, on Thursday.

Nirav Shah

Shah, former director of Maine's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, announced Thursday he was vying to be the next Democratic Senate candidate. He came in second in this year's Maine Democratic governor's primary and was seen as more of a moderate candidate compared with Jackson while running for governor. Shah held a news conference Thursday in which he encouraged Platner supporters to join him.

"You have an important place in this campaign and we welcome your voices," Shah said. "This campaign represents the values that we all care about."

Dan Kleban

The co-founder of Maine Beer Company, Kleban also confirmed his candidacy on Wednesday after Platner's announcement. Kleban briefly entered the Senate race last year before dropping out when Mills announced her candidacy. Kleban, 49, endorsed Mills, who later dropped out of the Democratic primary.

"I'm ready to fight for Mainers and bring a new generation of leadership to Washington," Kleban said.

Shenna Bellows

Bellows is Maine's secretary of state. She announced Thursday that she's running for the seat, saying she's spent her career "taking on tough fights and doing the right thing," where she's served as a former civil liberties advocate and sparred with President-elect Donald Trump over ballot access.

This wouldn't be her first time running for political office. Bellows, 51, placed fourth in the state's Democratic governor's primary in June. And in 2014, Bellows ran against Collins as the Senate Democratic nominee and lost in a landslide.

Jordan Wood

Wood, 36, initially attempted to run in the Maine Democratic Senate primary last year but dropped out to run in the state's 2nd District. He lost that race, coming in third to state Auditor Matt Dunlap. He's since said he's interested in running for the Senate again, and announced on Thursday.

"To beat Susan Collins, we need a candidate who can provide a true contrast and run an unapologetically progressive campaign: Passing Medicare for All. Stopping ICE terrorizing our streets," Wood wrote on social media on Tuesday.

Paige Loud

Loud filed paperwork to run for the Senate seat earlier this week. The 29-year-old social worker also ran in the state's 2nd District Democratic primary, but came in last during the state's first round of ranked choice voting.

Valli Geiger

Geiger, a previous Platner supporter and a state Democratic lawmaker, is another potential candidate. She hasn't announced her candidacy, but in an interview with MS NOW on Wednesday, Geiger, 70, said she would hire Platner's staff, whom she described as "deeply impassioned and confident young people."

David Costello

Costello ran in the June primary and finished third behind Platner, who won, and Mills, who was still on the ballot despite having suspended her campaign. Costello announced Thursday that he is back in the race. He said in a social media post that he believes he is the right candidate because his "lived experiences are rooted in the same challenges countless Mainers face every day."

LA uses World Cup to show off upgraded public transit and test plans to hold car-free Olympics

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — When Matthew Smith took his five-year-old son to a World Cup game in the Los Angeles area earlier this month, they opted to take public transit instead of driving from their nearby coastal city.

It was Smith's first time on the LA Metro in a decade, and the experience exceeded his expectations.

"Seems like a very functioning transit system, which is somewhat surprising given its reputation," he said.

That is the reaction Metro officials were hoping for as they used the 2026 FIFA World Cup's eight LA games to introduce — or reintroduce — people to the region's public transit system, often an afterthought in car-centric Los Angeles. It is an early test run of sorts for the 2028 Olympics, which organizers have billed as a "no car" Games where there will be no parking for attendees at any of the venues. Spectators will have to rely on transit and shuttles to get to events.

Nearly 50,000 rides were taken on rail lines for the July 2 Spain-Austria game that Smith and his son attended. There is no train that runs directly to SoFi Stadium in the LA suburb of Inglewood, but Metro has added 15 shuttle lines to transport people there from major rail stations and transit centers — the farthest route taking one hour and 15 minutes. More than 30,000 rides were taken on those shuttles for that game alone, the agency said.

The Metro will take a similar approach for the Olympics because many venues don't connect directly to the system. For the World Cup, the agency borrowed about 200 buses to meet the increased demand. Officials have said they will need to borrow 3,000 buses for the Olympics.

Officials work to overcome safety fears

For many residents, public transit isn't baked into everyday life in Los Angeles, the nation's second most-populous city, quite the same way it is in other major urban centers like New York and Chicago. LA Metro estimates the system provides about 1 million rides each day — roughly the same as Chicago, a smaller city. In New York, meanwhile, it is well over 3 million on the average weekday.

Many view LA's rail and bus system as unreliable at best and unsafe at worse. Certain high-profile violent incidents, such as a 67-year-old woman who died from being stabbed on a Metro train in 2024, have driven those perceptions. Some riders are also concerned about drug use, cleanliness and the presence of homeless people.

In June, Metro opened applications for its police force, which it hopes to have fully deployed by 2029 to replace the LAPD. The agency hopes having its own sworn officers working along with homeless outreach and crisis response teams will help riders feel safer on its trains and buses.

Metro has also touted data that showed a decline in violent crime over the past two years, with a 13.6% decrease in overall crime in March 2026 compared to a year before.

Martha Banuelos used the transit system sporadically before but generally preferred to "avoid it like the plague." She started riding the trains again recently to get into the city from North Hollywood for World Cup watch parties.

"It's a lot cleaner and smells way better," she said.

Officials see World Cup as an opportunity

Metro has partnered with FIFA to host fan zones and watch parties at key transit hubs — where thousands of fans from around the region gathered to drink, dance to DJ sets, and cheer for their favorite teams. Metro has advertised limited edition tap cards for different countries and leaned into social media to promote public transit during the games.

The system also upgraded its payment options before the World Cup to allow riders to pay directly with a credit card like other cities that have done away with tap cards.

Those efforts worked to draw in new riders like Yasmin Cortez, a 32-year-old who took the train for the first time ever to attend the official FIFA Fan Festival at the LA Memorial Coliseum to watch matches, volunteer for FIFA, and soak in the World Cup spirit. A week later, she took the rail again to root for Uruguay

at the Union Station Fan Zone, from Cerritos about 16 miles (26 kilometers) southwest of LA.

"Especially with gas prices now, yeah I should be taking the Metro," she said. "There's a lot to explore, and I bought some new walking shoes."

Looking ahead to 2028 Olympics

During the last Summer Games, Paris was lauded for how accessible the Games were, with nearly every venue reachable by Metro, commuter train, tram or bus.

LA, long known for congested roadways, is hard at work to expand its own transit options as the Games quickly approach.

Transit enthusiasts rejoiced at the long-awaited extension of the D line in May, which runs east-west connecting downtown LA to Koreatown, and now further west, where popular tourist attractions like the Grove shopping mall, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the La Brea Tar Pits are.

It marked the first opening of a heavy rail expansion project in the U.S. since 2020. Four more stations are under construction to extend the line to the University of California, Los Angeles campus, which will serve as the official Athlete Village for the 2028 games.

"LA is a transit city," said Jennifer Vides, Metro's chief customer experience officer. "People want to try to say that it's not. Obviously we have a lot more expansion to do and we're working on it. But people really want transit."

Former Olympian pleads not guilty in Reflecting Pool damage case after Trump alleged vandalism

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Olympic canoe racer pleaded not guilty on Thursday to deliberately damaging the recently renovated Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, a politically charged case that his defense attorneys and other Trump administration critics have derided as an abuse of prosecutorial power.

David Hearn, who competed in three Summer Olympics, entered the plea through one of his attorneys during his initial appearance in D.C. Superior Court. Hearn, 67, of Bethesda, Maryland, was indicted last Thursday on a single felony count of property destruction.

Before the country's 250th independence celebrations, President Donald Trump launched a multimillion dollar renovation project for the Reflecting Pool, which was plagued by problems, including damage to its new coating. Trump, without providing evidence, has alleged the damage was caused by vandals.

Hearn has said he reached inside the pool to examine the peeled sealant and let go of a chunk when he was told to by a park worker. He is accused of causing more than \$1,000 in damage.

"Every American should be alarmed about this prosecution," defense attorney Norm Eisen said after the hearing. "It is not a crime to touch the Reflecting Pool."

At least three other people have been charged in the same court with misdemeanors for allegedly removing pieces of paint from the Reflecting Pool, according to online court records. All three pleaded not guilty during their initial court appearances Wednesday, records show.

U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, the top federal prosecutor for the District of Columbia, said vandalizing the nation's monuments and public spaces is "an affront to our shared history."

"The law applies equally to everyone, and when it is broken, there are consequences," she said in a statement on Thursday.

Defense says prosecutors' evidence is 'weak'

In front of a packed courtroom, D.C. Superior Court Judge Carmen McLean did not require Hearn to be supervised by the court while he is free awaiting a trial. A status hearing was scheduled for Aug. 5.

A prosecutor, Kevin Reddington, said the government wasn't seeking any court supervision for Hearn, but just a "stay-away order" without specifying in court where it wanted to keep Hearn away from.

Mary Dohrmann, one of Hearn's attorneys, urged the judge not to impose any conditions of court supervision, calling Hearn an "upstanding citizen and member of the community."

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"The government's evidence is weak," she added.

Supporters cheered after the hearing

Dozens of supporters, many carrying homemade signs, gathered outside the courthouse and chanted "Davey!" as Hearn left after the hearing. Hearn joined his attorneys in front of a bank of cameras and smiled to supporters but did not speak. He raised his right hand and pumped his fist as he left.

Adam Van Grack, who chaired the U.S. Olympic national governing body for canoe and kayak sports, joined the throng of supporters who cheered for Hearn after the hearing. Van Grack said Hearn has spent decades voluntarily maintaining National Park Service property that the canoeists used as a training course along the Potomac River.

"This is a person who has devoted his life to representing the United States on an international stage, caring for the community and protecting and caring for National Park Service property," Van Grack said. "So the idea that he is a malicious destroyer of federal property shocks the conscience and makes no sense to anybody who's ever known Davey Hearn."

Hearn previously told The Associated Press that he was detained by National Guard troops and U.S. Park Police for five hours after stopping by the pool during a 64-mile (103 kilometer) bike ride on June 19. He said he reached in to examine newly peeled coating and briefly touched a chunk attached to the side of the pool, but obeyed a park worker who told him to let go of it.

Pool project has been plagued by problems

The pool's renovation has been riddled with problems. Workers have used devices called nanobubblers to curtail an algae bloom. The devices infuse ozone into the water to kill algae and bacteria. Officials have said the pool most likely would need to be drained again for liner repairs after chunks of blue coating were seen floating at the surface.

Trump has claimed without substantiation that vandals dumped fertilizer into the pool and slashed the coating with a box cutter. Pirro, a former Fox News host who was appointed by Trump, said last week that six other people were arrested on misdemeanor charges related to the \$16 million pool project.

Pirro accused Hearn of causing more than \$1,000 in damage by ripping up recently installed sealant from the pool and acting belligerently toward an employee who told him to stop.

Hearn's attorneys have said the charges against him are based on a "concocted narrative" and "should be alarming to every American."

"This indictment reflects the administration's effort to shift blame for their own failures," the lawyers said in a statement. "The justice system exists to determine facts, not to provide political cover."

Wally Funk, aviation pioneer who was the oldest woman to travel into space, dies at 87

GRAPEVINE, Texas (AP) — Wally Funk, an aviation pioneer who was the oldest woman to launch into space, has died. She was 87.

Funk died Wednesday at her apartment in an assisted living facility in the Dallas and Fort Worth suburb of Grapevine, Texas, Grapevine City Councilwoman Duff O'Dell said Thursday. O'Dell, who described herself as Funk's caregiver, said she was by Funk's side. Funk had fallen a couple of times recently and had an infection in her leg.

"It took its toll," O'Dell said in a phone interview.

Funk was one of 13 female pilots who went through the same tests as NASA's all-male astronaut corps in the early 1960s but never made it into space with that agency. In 2021, she got her chance aboard Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin rocket.

At the time, the 82-year-old was the oldest person to go into space, though the record was later broken by "Star Trek" actor William Shatner and Ed Dwight, America's first Black astronaut candidate. They were both 90.

Bezos chose Funk as an "honored guest" to ride alongside him and two others on an up-and-down hop from West Texas.

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In a post on X, Blue Origin said Funk was a "pioneer in every sense of the word."

"We were humbled to be part of her journey," the post said.

O'Dell said Funk was the "most eternally optimistic person" she had ever met.

"She was told by many, many, many men, 'No, you can't do this. No you can't do that,' " O'Dell said. "And she never got mad about it. She just was more determined."

Funk was the first female inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration and the first female air safety investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, according to a brief biography released by the City of Grapevine.

In the 1960s, she and other female pilots went through astronaut training in the Mercury 13 program, but they were not allowed to become astronauts.

"Wally Funk never stopped believing that one day she would reach space. Her passion for flight, perseverance, and love of exploration will continue to inspire generations of Americans. Godspeed, Wally," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman posted Thursday on X.

Stocks recover losses, and oil prices ease as calm returns to financial markets worldwide

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks rose, and oil prices eased Thursday as financial markets calmed in the wait to see what will come next after President Donald Trump raised doubts about the temporary truce in the war with Iran.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.8% and more than recovered its loss from the day before, even though the United States launched new airstrikes against Iran, which responded by targeting U.S. allies in the Middle East. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 139 points, or 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 1.3%.

In the oil market, prices gave back much of their jumps from the day before. The price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, fell 2.2% to \$76.30. That's down from \$78.02 the day before though still above its \$71.80 price from the end of last week.

The worry is that a return to full-blown war will block oil tankers from the Strait of Hormuz and prevent the delivery of crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide. That could worsen inflation, which economists expected would ease with oil prices, and in turn force the Federal Reserve and other central banks to raise interest rates.

Higher rates can keep a lid on inflation, but they also slow the economy and hurt prices for all kinds of investments.

But Trump also said Wednesday that the latest back-and-forth fighting would not result in "long-term" military action, raising uncertainty about just what will happen.

The swings for oil prices halted what had been a steady decline in gasoline prices, and the cost for a gallon climbed a nickel overnight, according to motor club AAA. The average price for a gallon of regular gasoline was \$3.85 Thursday, up 68 cents from a year earlier.

In the meantime, renewed strength for makers of computer chips and other winners of the boom around artificial-intelligence technology helped to support stock markets worldwide.

In South Korea, whose stock market is dominated by two companies that make semiconductors, the Kospi index rose 0.6% after tumbling 5.3% the day before. SK Hynix, which is preparing to sell shares of its stock that will trade in the United States, jumped 5.3% in Seoul.

On Wall Street, Micron Technology's climb of 4.5% was one of the strongest forces lifting the S&P 500. Micron cited "surging demand for memory in the AI era" as it gave a progress update on construction in central New York of what it says is the largest semiconductor manufacturing site in U.S. history.

Such stocks have become some of Wall Street's most influential after growing so big in the euphoria around AI. But AI stocks have also come under pressure recently because of worries their prices shot too high and that AI may not create enough productivity and profits to make all the investments in chips and

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data centers worth it.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 60.93 points to 7,543.64. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 139.02 to 52,487.41, and the Nasdaq composite rose 336.24 to 26,206.89.

Stocks broadly got some help from falling yields in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.54% from 4.56% late Wednesday.

It had been climbing on worries about high oil prices and the potential for higher interest rates, which cranked up the pressure on stocks and prices for other investments.

Besides the war with Iran, another big event for Wall Street is the upcoming start of earnings reporting season for companies. Next week, the biggest banks are set to unveil how much profit they made from April through June. Companies across industries will need to report strong growth to justify the big moves their stock prices have made.

PepsiCo fell 3.3% even though it reported slightly better revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Numbers released by the company behind Gatorade and Doritos showed weakening trends in its North American food and drinks businesses.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe and Asia.

Besides Seoul's climb, stock indexes rose 1.7% in Shanghai and 0.9% in Paris.

On the losing end was Hong Kong's Hang Seng, which slipped 0.7% as shares of Apple supplier Luxshare fell 1.5% in its trading debut.

Fire at a shoe factory kills 28 in one of China's deadliest blazes in recent years

BEIJING (AP) — A fire broke out at a shoe factory in the southeastern Chinese province of Fujian on Thursday, killing 28 people, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping demanded "an all-out search and rescue effort," urging a swift investigation of the incident and "strictly hold those responsible accountable."

The blaze started in a factory at Huiteng shoe company in the city of Jinjiang, the city's fire department said in a statement. The cause of the fire was not immediately known. Jinjiang is a major manufacturing hub for sports shoes.

There were 237 factory workers and two visitors in the building when the fire broke out. Authorities pulled out 213 people, two of whom were pronounced dead after being taken to hospital. Another 26 missing people were later confirmed dead, according to the state broadcaster CCTV.

Xinhua said the factory's owner and others in charge have been taken into custody and the company's accounts have been frozen.

Video by CCTV shows the facade of a building of several floors charred black and covered in white smoke. Earlier footage shows fires were burning on multiple floors and the building shrouded in thick, black smoke.

The fire started on the first level of a five-floor concrete-structured building, where a workshop and a warehouse were located. The burning materials included shoe components, which are highly flammable and helped the fire spread quickly, according to CCTV.

A local fire department official said in an interview with the state broadcaster that sole material piled up in stairwells made it much harder for the firefighters to reach the flames and put them out.

CCTV also said the fire department sent 183 people and 35 vehicles to the factory and that open flames were extinguished after about four hours. Xinhua later said more than 500 people joined the rescue and search operation.

Work safety has been a persistent problem in China. In May, an explosion at a fireworks plant in the city of Changsha in the central province of Hunan killed at least 37 people. In 2024, a fire at a refrigeration facility under construction killed 39 people in the city of Xinyu in the southeastern Jiangxi province.

Authorities have repeatedly ordered businesses to screen for workplace hazards. Official data show that 18,261 people died in nearly 20,000 workplace accidents across the country in 2025, down from the previous year.

Ukrainian drones batter Russian oil facilities and set more oil tankers ablaze

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian drones hit more Russian oil facilities and set two oil tankers ablaze in the Sea of Azov on Thursday, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump pledged to grant Kyiv a license to manufacture the Patriot air defense systems to protect its cities.

A top Ukrainian official, meanwhile, cautioned that it could take a year or more for the country to produce Patriot interceptor missiles.

The Kremlin said the license deal reflected what it called Washington's "ambivalence" but noted it appreciated Trump's efforts to help broker a peace deal to end the war, which Russia launched over four years ago.

Ukraine's drone strikes on oil refineries and other infrastructure across Russia have triggered a widespread fuel crisis with gasoline shortages and rationing in multiple regions and motorists waiting for hours to fill their tanks. Moscow has responded by intensifying its bombardment on Kyiv and other cities, exposing Ukraine's vulnerability to ballistic missile strikes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the latest strikes on Russia's infrastructure as part of Kyiv's campaign of "long-range sanctions" carried out in response to Moscow's refusal to halt the fighting.

"We have long proposed that Russia end this war, and every day of delay should bring the feeling of war to where it all began — to Russia," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine hits oil depots in western Russia and tankers at sea

A Ukrainian drone strike sparked a fire at an oil depot in the western Russian city of Tver, according to acting Gov. Vitaly Korolyov. Oil reservoirs also were set ablaze by drones in Vyazniki, in the southern Stavropol region, said Gov. Vladimir Vladimirov, forcing the evacuation of nearby apartment buildings.

In the Sea of Azov, Ukrainian drones set two oil tankers on fire, according to Rostov Gov. Yuri Slusar, who said one of the ships was still burning and its crew evacuated.

It was the latest in a series of strikes on oil tankers in recent days, part of Ukrainian efforts to cut fuel supplies to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

In addition to the Stavropol and Tver facilities, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces hit fuel infrastructure deep inside Russia, including one in Ufa, as well as an oil-loading terminal in the Rostov region closer to Ukraine.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its defenses downed 73 Ukrainian drones from late Wednesday into early Thursday.

Ukraine's air force said Russia fired 94 long-range strike drones and two ballistic missiles. While 72 drones were jammed or intercepted, 19 drones and both missiles damaged 13 locations, it said.

Ukraine says its Patriot production will take months

During Wednesday's meeting with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Turkey, Trump said the U.S. will meet a longstanding request from Ukraine and give it a license to make the Patriot air defense systems. He also praised Zelenskyy for doing "an amazing job" — a sharp change in tone from past criticisms of the Ukrainian leader.

But setting up domestic production of the mobile, surface-to-air systems will take many months, said Serhii Beskrestnov, an adviser to Ukraine's defense minister.

A production license would typically come with technical process documentation, training for specialists, supplier contacts and foreign consultants to help launch manufacturing, Beskrestnov wrote on his Telegram channel.

The main obstacle would be time, rather than Ukraine's technical or organizational capacity, he added.

Recent media reports pointed to two likely bottlenecks: the long production cycle for some subcontracted components, which could take 12 to 24 months, and limited global output of key parts, including components from Boeing and L3Harris, Beskrestnov added.

The Pentagon had signed contracts to expand production capacity, he said, but added that the timeline for those contracts to translate into increased output remained unclear.

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"America has recognized Ukraine as a country that is ready to do this," Zelenskyy said Thursday, answering reporters' questions on WhatsApp. "Now, after our agreement with the president, our teams, our diplomats, the foreign ministries and defense ministries need to agree on all the remaining technical details. The sooner we reach those agreements, the sooner we will be able to produce Patriots."

Germany also has a license to produce Patriot systems, and in 2022, Raytheon and MBDA Deutschland announced they planned to manufacture Patriot GEM-T missiles in the country, according to a news release at the time. The goal was to produce them in a German facility and ultimately provide them to other European allies.

The facility is expected to open in September with its first missiles scheduled to be delivered next year, with Ukraine as the first recipient, according to Defense Express, an online Ukrainian military-oriented publication.

The Kremlin says Ukrainian strikes won't hasten peace

Commenting on Trump's statement about the Patriot licenses, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov offered a vague response, saying Moscow is aware of the U.S. military support for Ukraine but appreciates Washington's declared commitment to help achieve peace.

"The U.S. position is somewhat ambivalent," Peskov said in a call with reporters. "Still, unlike the Europeans, the United States maintains a desire to facilitate a move toward a peace process. They may be misguided or mistaken at times, but we see that desire as sincere. We welcome it, and we hope that once the Americans manage to resolve the situation regarding Iran despite the significant complications involved their efforts on the Ukrainian track will resume."

Asked about Trump's comment that Ukrainian attacks inside Russia could hasten a peace settlement, Peskov reaffirmed that the more strikes Kyiv launches, the broader "security zone" Moscow will seek to carve out in Ukraine via what the Kremlin calls its "special military operation."

"It's a mistake to think that escalation and military pressure could pave the way to a peaceful settlement," he said. "Further escalation may prolong the special military operation, we can't say precisely to what extent, but it will force us to create a larger security zone, a larger buffer zone."

Ukraine has urged the U.S. and other allies to provide binding security guarantees as part of any prospective peace deal, including the deployment of NATO forces. Russia has strongly warned against the presence of any NATO troops in Ukraine, saying it would view them as legitimate targets.

Asked Wednesday if he would be ready to enact a no-fly zone over Ukraine as part of security guarantees, Trump responded by saying "if it's necessary, yeah," but he argued it might not be needed if a peace deal is reached.

"When we have a deal, we're going to have a deal, security guarantee or no security guarantee," Trump said as he sat next to Zelenskyy.

Commenting on the issue, Peskov warned that an attempt to establish a no-fly zone would amount to "NATO military forces being active on the territory of Ukraine -- exactly what the special military operation is being waged against."

Peskov said President Vladimir Putin is "open to dialogue" and ready for another phone call with Trump.

US star Christian Pulisic fractured his leg in World Cup loss to Belgium

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

U.S. star Christian Pulisic fractured his right leg during the Americans' World Cup loss to Belgium and will be sidelined for several weeks.

Pulisic has a bone bruise and a microfracture of his tibia and fibula, the U.S. Soccer Federation said Thursday. The diagnosis was made after an X-ray and MRI on Tuesday.

He would not have been able to play during the remainder of the tournament had the U.S. advanced.

Pulisic is expected to resume training before AC Milan's Serie A opener at Torino on Aug. 23.

Pulisic hit a leg of Belgium captain Yuri Tielemans while attempting a shot in the 52nd minute of Mon-

day's 4-1 round-of-16 loss at Seattle. He remained in the game but was hobbling and Sebastian Berhalter replaced him in the 59th minute.

Pulisic failed to score in the World Cup, missing one of the Americans' five matches because of a calf injury and leaving two other games early. He has 30 goals in 90 international appearances.

Pulisic, who turns 28 in September, is entering his fourth season with Milan.

George E. Johnson Sr., founder of a pioneering Black hair care business, dies at 99

By COREY WILLIAMS and AISHA I. JEFFERSON Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — George E. Johnson Sr., a pioneer in Black hair care whose multimillion-dollar business was the first Black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange, has died at age 99, according to his family.

Johnson died Monday at his home in downtown Chicago. A cause of death was not released.

Johnson and his late wife and high school sweetheart, Joan, started Johnson Products Company in 1954 on Chicago's South Side after securing a \$250 loan. It grew into a hair care empire catering almost exclusively to Black people, with brands like Afro Sheen and Ultra Sheen.

People who remember Afro Sheen and Ultra Sheen in their heyday also remember the brands' marketing campaigns and their association with the "Black is Beautiful" movement, which promoted cultural and racial pride among Black people. The iconic 1970s commercials, which featured variations of the "Watu Wazuri" ("Beautiful People") jingle, have enjoyed a resurgence on social media in recent years.

The commercials aired primarily during the hit music-and-dance television show "Soul Train," which his company was a national sponsor of and once owned.

"It was just a wonderful opportunity for Don Cornelius to be able to go national. He wouldn't have been able to do that without George Johnson's partnership," said John W. Rogers, the founder of Chicago-based Ariel Investments who was a mentee of Johnson. "And so, to see it work out for everyone and for our community all together was part of his genius."

A legacy worth celebrating

During its annual gala in November, the Chicago Urban League celebrated Johnson as the Edwin C. "Bill" Berry Civil Rights Award honoree, named for the League's iconic leader. Berry joined Johnson Products when he left the organization, according to Karen Freeman-Wilson, president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League. She said the honor was a full-circle moment for Johnson, who was a longtime board member.

"Just 12 or 14 days ago, he was standing with Barack Obama in the presidential library, dedicating a room for he and my mother," Eric George Johnson, the eldest of Johnson's four children, told The Associated Press. "It's a wonderful life to celebrate."

Johnson's trajectory started from humble beginnings.

He was born in 1927 in Richton, Mississippi. Johnson's mother, Priscilla Dean Johnson, was just 18 when she left her husband, took her children to Chicago and found a job at a local hospital, said Hilary Beard, a Philadelphia-based author who worked with Johnson on his memoir.

Their move occurred during what's known as the First Great Migration, between 1910 and 1940, when tens of thousands of southern Black people moved to northern and Midwestern cities for jobs and to escape racial oppression.

"There was just enough money for food, clothing and shelter, but not for anything extra," Beard said.

Johnson and his older brother, John, would collect cigarette packages, peel out the aluminum linings, roll them into balls and sell them to people who collected junk for resale, Beard said. Johnson also shined shoes, cleared tables in eateries and set up pins in a bowling alley.

A source of pride and inspiration

As an adult, Johnson worked for the Black-owned Fuller Products Co. in Chicago. Beard said Johnson met a barber who was distraught because he couldn't convince Fuller to back a product he was developing that straightened men's hair. The drawback was the product burned the scalp.

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Johnson worked with Fuller's chemist to revamp the barber's formula and started his business after ultimately convincing a bank he needed a \$250 loan to take his wife on a vacation, Beard said. That business would become Johnson Products.

Johnson's company offered above-market salaries, profit-sharing for its workers, healthcare and other benefits at a time when many companies didn't provide such perks, Beard added. Johnson Products was sold in 1993 to a pharmaceutical firm in a deal worth more than \$60 million.

Johnson later founded Independence Bank and became the first Black person to serve on the board of directors of the Illinois electric utility Commonwealth Edison. The George E. Johnson Educational Fund awarded more than 1,000 college scholarships.

Rogers remembers his father taking him to Independence Bank to open a checking account and being awed that Johnson owned it.

"That was just so impressive to me that he would start the largest Black bank in the country" which helped Black entrepreneurs, homeowners and anyone who needed assistance as they were building their lives, Rogers said.

The Golden Rule

Though Johnson is gone, the lessons he imparted continue to shape the family's future.

Eric Johnson, who served as CEO, left Johnson Products Company in 1992. He said he purchased Baldwin Ice Cream in 1997, intending to keep the company in the family for generations to come. Eric Johnson officially retired from Baldwin Richardson Foods on May 9 after successfully transitioning ownership to his daughters, Erin Tolefree and Cara Hughes.

"He saw his children come along and be successful, and now his grandchildren being successful," Eric Johnson said.

Eric Johnson isn't the only one who sees that legacy continuing. Rogers points to the company's third generation of leadership as evidence.

"Eric's positioned his kids who are now running the business day-to-day. So it's a third generation, which is remarkable. They're doing so well," Rogers said.

Johnson's memoir, "Afro Sheen: How I Revolutionized an Industry with the Golden Rule, from Soul Train to Wall Street," was published in 2024.

Being fair and treating people the way you want to be treated was Johnson's golden rule, according to his son. And it's a cherished piece of advice that Eric Johnson said his father instilled in him.

"And it's a foundation that was established in him as a child by his mother, that he established in all of us," he said.

Catherine Zeta-Jones, Rod Stewart, Bryan Adams and more mourn the death of Bonnie Tyler

By The Associated Press undefined

Celebrities across the entertainment industry mourned the death of Bonnie Tyler at age 75, expressing affection and admiration for the gravelly voiced, Grammy-nominated Welsh pop star.

The singer, best-known for her chart-topping power ballad "Total Eclipse of the Heart," died unexpectedly in a hospital in Portugal where she was being treated for an illness, her family said Thursday. She was hospitalized in May in Faro, where she had a home, for emergency intestinal surgery. She had been placed in an induced coma for a period but was reportedly improving last month.

Some notable reaction:

Catherine Zeta-Jones

"My heart is broken with the news that our dearest Bonnie Tyler has passed away. Bonnie was married to my cousin and has been such a part of my life. We are photographed here together the night before my wedding. So sang and rocked it at my wedding. An extraordinary woman with vocals to match. A one of kind artist, who so easily could have been a comedian because she was one of the funniest people I ever met. Thank you Bonnie for the joy you brought so many. Sleep tight beautiful lady. We shall forever

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'Keep A Welcome In The Hillsides' of Wales for you. Sending my love to Robert and the family. God Bless"
— on Instagram

Rod Stewart

"We shared similar styles of vocalizing. She was a good pal, a true soul stirrer. I sing 'It's A Heartache' every night on tour. I'll miss you darling Bonnie." — on Instagram

Bryan Adams

"Dear Bonnie Tyler passed today, she had such a great voice and I'll always be grateful of her beautiful version of Straight From The Heart. Thanks Bonnie. RIP" — on X

Katrina Leskanich of Katrina and the Waves

"I'm so sad for Robert, Bonnie's extended family and the whole world who loved Bonnie Tyler. She was incredibly fun to tour with, always laughing, warm hearted and effervescent. There will never be a voice so instantly recognisable and distinctive. She will be so missed but like Bonnie, her iconic songs will be in our hearts forever." — on Instagram

Kevin Bacon

"One of the great voices of rock. ... I could not imagine chicken racing a tractor to any other song. RIP"
— in a statement to Entertainment Weekly, referencing the use of Tyler's "Holding Out For a Hero" in his iconic 1984 film, "Footloose"

Tony Hadley

"So sad to hear about Bonnie Tyler. She was an incredible woman, so kind and friendly to me as a young artist. Over the years, we met several times and she was always the same Bonnie. Her voice was truly amazing and standing next to her you really got to feel her power. A beautiful legend. My sincere condolences to her lovely husband Bob, her family and her wonderful band at this very sad time." — on Instagram

Sir Cliff Richard

"Another wonderful friend gone too soon. Bonnie's infectious zest for life entertained so many around the world, and to be a good friend to all, including me. It is shocking news to wake up to you this morning and I send my love to her family at this very sad time. RIP Bonnie.... Cliff xx" — on Facebook

New attacks raise questions about what comes next in the Iran war

By WILL WEISSERT, FARNOUSH AMIRI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says he believes the ceasefire with Iran is over. He says he's not sure he wants a deal anymore and says the U.S. should "finish the job." But he also insists that continued attacks do not mean a return to war or long-term action.

The confusion and uncertainty in Trump's mixed messaging and his approval of back-to-back military strikes leave major questions about what comes next in the conflict, just weeks after difficult diplomacy to reach even an initial deal between the longtime adversaries.

The whipsawing rhetoric could be a strategy to increase the pressure on Tehran to stop attacking ships transporting oil and natural gas in the Strait of Hormuz and bend to U.S. demands on its nuclear program — something Trump has tried before.

Whether it is a negotiation tactic or a signal of an escalation in fighting, mediators are scrambling to save the interim deal and the actions risk further inflaming tensions — which could spell problems for Republicans in November's midterm elections if gas prices stay high.

Trump warned Wednesday that a new round of U.S. attacks was coming, even as he attempted to shrug off suggestions of a return to full-scale war. Hours later, the military announced it was carrying out new attacks on Iran that were meant to "further degrade their ability to threaten freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz."

"Anything that happens is going to happen very fast," Trump said earlier. "We're not looking for a long time."

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Officials rush to save the ceasefire

A regional intelligence official involved in the mediation efforts said the conflict had reached a critical stage as mutual mistrust rises. But high-level communications are happening around the clock to salvage the ceasefire, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the delicate behind-the-scenes negotiations.

The foreign ministers of Pakistan and Qatar, as well as Egypt's intelligence chief, are leading the efforts, while Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan — whose country hosted the NATO summit that wrapped Wednesday — and leaders from Saudi Arabia are also involved, the official said.

The U.S. is upset about ships being attacked in the Strait of Hormuz and accuses Iran of slow-playing discussions on curtailing its nuclear program, the official said. Nuclear talks were a major next step to try to turn the interim deal announced last month into a lasting end to the war.

Tehran, meanwhile, says Washington is the one violating the agreement regarding the strait and failing to ensure that a ceasefire in Lebanon, including an Israeli withdrawal, is being implemented, the official said.

Michael Eisenstadt, a former U.S. military analyst who now directs the Military and Security Studies Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said that "we're still in negotiating mode, no matter what the president says."

"This is part of negotiating, and declaring that the MOU is over is part of the negotiation as well," Eisenstadt said, referring to the memorandum of understanding that the ceasefire was built on.

Trump, though, has been explicit in public comments, saying he's lost interest in preserving the ceasefire: "I think it's over."

"We can play games, but I'm not sure I want to make a deal," he said during the NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, adding that the U.S. military might "just finish the job."

Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Iran's lead negotiator, said the Trump administration had repeatedly violated the terms of the initial pact, forcing the country to respond appropriately.

"The era of bullying and extortion is over," Qalibaf posted on X. "It leads nowhere. We don't fold."

Trump says 'we'll probably hit them hard again'

Pakistan, which helped broker the ceasefire, said renewed conflict is in "no one's interest" and urged both sides to uphold their commitments.

"There is no alternative to continued engagement, dialogue and diplomacy to achieve shared goal of peace in the region," its Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Trump, nonetheless, dismissed Tehran's leaders, calling them "scum" and "sick people." Just last month, Trump said Iran's leadership was "very rational" and "nice to deal with," while also calling the country's leaders "smart people."

Speaking at an event in Milwaukee on Wednesday, Vice President JD Vance, who led U.S. efforts to reach the initial deal with Tehran, said Iran was "well behaved for about a week." He added that lately the country had begun attacking the strait and said, "If they shoot at ships, we're going to knock the hell out of them."

Could this be another negotiating tactic?

Before the U.S. and Iran reached their first, two-week ceasefire in April, Trump intensified his threats, pledging that American forces would bomb Iranian bridges, roads and power plants. He even posted online, "A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again."

He repeated dire threats before the tentative 60-day deal to end the war was reached last month.

Trump likes to seek ways to negotiate from a position of strength, and he could be looking for more leverage with new strikes. But being unequivocal about the end of the ceasefire also could free up Iran militarily — which could again roil oil prices and financial markets.

Ali Vaez, Iran director at the International Crisis Group, argued that escalating threats may be a riskier maneuver this time around, given the domestic and international stakes for the U.S.

"It certainly looks like an effort to turn up the military heat without yet closing the diplomatic door," Vaez said. "But coercive bargaining is a dangerous game: At some point, a pressure campaign can acquire a

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momentum of its own and become the war it was ostensibly meant to avoid.”

He added, however, that Iran still has every reason to return to the table because it desperately needs the economic relief that was promised under the interim deal.

Trump also has sent mixed signals about the fallout.

He long insisted that rising gas prices for Americans didn’t factor into his calculations on Iran — only to say that part of the reason he agreed to the interim deal was to avoid an “economic catastrophe.” He has since touted the falling price of oil after the deal was reached.

Elections ahead could scramble Trump’s political calculus

The president again resumed his past threats to strike Iran’s civilian infrastructure, possibly including electric plants and desalinization plants, and to seize the oil-production hub of Kharg Island.

“We may take over Kharg Island,” he said. “There’s not a thing they could do about it.”

Still, the midterm elections — when Republicans hope to retain control of the House and Senate — are now less than four months away. Oil prices rising again amid greater uncertainty about the war means Americans will likely continue to see higher prices at the pump.

The president tried to play down such concerns, saying, “Any time we hit them, it goes up a little bit — \$2.” In fact, U.S. oil futures jumped far higher and may keep climbing — even as Trump acknowledged, “As oil goes, so goes everything else.”

He argued that an increase in oil prices was worth it to bar Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. “It’s all right.”

US home prices hit an all-time high as sales slow and mortgage rates rise

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes slowed in June, but a key measure of home prices climbed to an all-time high, adding to affordability challenges for prospective homebuyers.

Existing home sales fell 2.4% last month from May to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.09 million units, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday. Sales rose 2.8% compared with June last year.

The latest sales tally fell short of the roughly 4.21 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

Home sales have been mostly hovering close to a 4-million annual pace going back to 2023, far short of the historic norm that is closer to 5.2-million.

Sales have remained sluggish as mortgage rates have mostly trended higher in the months since the war between the U.S. and Iran started. Expectations of higher inflation amid surging oil prices have pushed up the long-term bond yields that lenders use as a guide to pricing home loans, causing mortgage rates to climb. Still, mortgage rates remain below where they were a year ago.

Despite the lackluster sales, home prices continued to rise nationally last month. The U.S. median sales price increased 1.8% in June from a year earlier to \$440,600, an all-time high on data going back to 1999, NAR said. Home prices have risen on an annual basis for 36 months in a row.

First-time buyers accounted for 33% of home purchases last month, down from 35% in May and up from 30% in June last year. Historically, they made up 40% of home sales.

“Without a doubt, the affordability is a major challenge for people who want to become homeowners, which is the reason why we need more supply,” said Lawrence Yun, NAR’s chief economist.

The U.S. housing market has been in a slump since 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes were essentially flat last year, stuck at a 30-year low.

Through the first half of this year, seasonally adjusted sales of existing U.S. homes are up only 0.7% compared to the same period in 2025.

Years of soaring home prices, especially in the early part of this decade when rock-bottom mortgage rates fueled a buying frenzy, have left many would-be homebuyers frozen out of the market. And a chronic

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shortage of homes for sale nationally, due partly to years of below-average new home construction, has helped prop up home prices even in a multiyear sales slump.

Many of the homes purchased last month likely went under contract in April and May, when the average rate on a 30-year mortgage ranged from 6.23% to 6.53% -- the highest level going back to late August, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

Those who can afford to buy at current mortgage rates or pay all cash are likely to encounter buyer-friendly trends in many markets. In June, median list prices fell 2.5% from a year earlier, the steepest annual drop on data going back to 2017, according to Realtor.com.

Still, housing market pricing trends vary widely regionally and locally. Consider, since peaking in 2022 at \$449,000, list prices have come down 7.3% in the West and 3.5% in the South, but are up 10% in the Midwest and 12.6% in the Northeast, according to Realtor.com.

Meanwhile, home shoppers have more homes on the market to choose from than this time last year, although home inventory levels remain well below historical norms.

There were 1.56 million unsold homes at the end of last month, down 0.6% from May and up 1.3% from June last year, NAR said. That's still well short of the roughly 2 million homes for sale that was typical before the COVID-19 pandemic.

June's month-end inventory translates to a 4.6-month supply at the current sales pace. Traditionally, a 5- to 6-month supply is considered a balanced market between buyers and sellers.

"We need to see 30%-40% growth in inventory," Yun said. "We're not seeing that, so inventory (is) still remaining relatively tight."

Ebola death toll in Congo reaches 600, as new cases suspected in previously unaffected provinces

By JEAN-YVES KAMALE and JUSTIN KABUMBA Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — New suspected cases of Ebola have been reported in parts of Congo that were previously unaffected, the government said Thursday, as the death toll in the country's latest Ebola outbreak reached 600.

According to the Congolese health ministry, suspected cases have now been recorded in the provinces of Tshopo and Haut-Uele, signaling the continued spread of the disease beyond the epicenter in Ituri.

A Congolese government report, published late Wednesday, said two new cases were suspected in Kisangani, in Tshopo province. The minister did not say how many cases were suspected in Haut-Uele. The total number of confirmed cases across the country has now reached 1,759.

The report said one of the two suspected cases in Tshopo was linked to the Nia-Nia health zone in Ituri province, where the first cases were reported, while the other case "has no apparent geographical connection to known outbreaks." Authorities were investigating.

The Africa Centre for Disease Control said on Thursday that the latest outbreak is the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on the continent.

The Congolese authorities declared a fresh Ebola outbreak on May 15, after the disease had been transmitting for weeks without official detection, according to the World Health Organization. The latest outbreak is caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus, which has no approved vaccine or treatment.

Last week, clinical trials for treatment began after researchers launched a highly anticipated study in the hope of fighting the virus.

Efforts to contain the virus have also been hampered by a funding gap, attacks on health centers, and an ongoing conflict in eastern Congo, the epicenter of the outbreak.

Maine Democrats plan convention to replace Platner: What to know about Senate race

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

SCARBOROUGH, Maine (AP) — The Maine Democratic Party has voted to hold a convention now that Democrat Graham Platner has announced he'll drop out of the state's U.S. Senate race after a former girlfriend accused him of sexual assault.

Platner, who denies the allegation, faced considerable pressure from his own party to quit the race. The first-time candidate also was accused of trying to influence how his replacement is selected — a claim he also denied. He announced his decision to leave the race Wednesday.

His exit leaves a crucial U.S. Senate race unsettled just months before the November midterm elections. The Maine Democratic Party, which by law is responsible for naming a replacement, announced it'll move forward with holding a nominating convention to choose a new nominee. Meanwhile, potential contenders have already begun teasing their interest.

Here's what we know about the Maine Senate race and what could be next:

The clock was ticking

According to Maine law, there's a narrow provision for replacing general election candidates. Platner needed to step aside voluntarily by 5 p.m. July 13 before other contenders could have been considered.

Once he formally withdraws, the law then says the Maine Democratic Party can choose a replacement, which must be done by July 27.

The state Democratic Party held an emergency meeting Wednesday, where more than 100 state committee members signed off on holding a nominating convention in the event of a vacancy.

"There is an unprecedented amount of energy and enthusiasm among Maine Democrats, driven in part by many of the dedicated volunteers and supporters who were inspired by Graham Platner's campaign," Maine Democratic leaders said in a joint statement.

It's incredibly rare for a general election candidate to bow out of a race, in Maine or elsewhere.

Platner campaign denies trying to influence the process

A key question surrounding how Platner is replaced has come down to just how much leverage the oyster farmer and Marine veteran has in this situation.

Maine Democratic Party's executive director, Devon Murphy-Anderson had previously released a statement accusing Platner's campaign of repeatedly trying to "put their thumb on the scale" in determining the next Democratic nominee.

Platner's team responded with a statement saying "at no point has the campaign tried to 'put its finger on the scale'" but said they were trying to understand the process. Thousands of Maine residents voted and volunteered for Platner, a progressive who outlasted establishment-backed Gov. Janet Mills, which the campaign believes should count in the decision.

The sparring between Platner's campaign and the party continued Wednesday. Murphy-Anderson said in a statement that Platner's campaign "remains focused on distracting from the job of defeating Susan Collins in November with false accusations against us" and the party "remains hyper focused on developing a representative, transparent and inclusive process to select a new nominee when he chooses to withdraw from the race."

Platner's campaign sent a survey with a 48-hour deadline to supporters on Wednesday that asked recipients two questions: what message they have for the Maine Democratic Party, and what message they have for Platner.

Separately Wednesday, President Donald Trump was asked if Democrats should be allowed to replace Platner on the Maine Senate ballot.

"So he won the primary. It's very hard for them. So, you question whether you believe the woman. A lot of people say big falsehoods," Trump said.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One as he returned from a NATO summit in Turkey, the president added of Platner: "He's in a bind. But, should they be able to do it? Well I guess he's gonna lose. I'd

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imagine he's going to lose."

List of possible replacements continues to grow

One possible contender, Nirav Shah, former director of Maine's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has said he was "evaluating" whether to join the race. Shah said he's been in contact with the Maine Democratic Party about ensuring that a possible replacement process is based on "openness, transparency and robustness."

Troy Jackson, Maine's former state Senate president, announced Wednesday he was officially entering the race. Jackson unsuccessfully ran to be the Democratic nominee for governor earlier this year with the backing of Platner and Our Revolution, the political organization started by Sen. Bernie Sanders. Jackson had filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission on Tuesday to launch a Senate exploratory committee.

Jordan Wood, a former U.S. Senate candidate who then switched to run for Maine's 2nd District and lost, posted Tuesday that he was "continuing conversations" with voters about joining the race.

Other names circulating include Shenna Bellows, the current Maine secretary of state; Dan Kleban, founder of Maine Beer Co.; and Hannah Pingree, now Maine's Democratic nominee for governor.

One name that definitely won't be on the ballot? Actor Patrick Dempsey. The "Grey's Anatomy" star and Maine native wrote an editorial Wednesday saying despite being asked, he's not interested.

Voters say they are disillusioned

Platner's campaign galvanized hundreds of volunteers around the state. This week, they've been expressing disappointment about the behavior Platner is accused of and pondering the right course of action.

Many called for him to drop out.

Paul Attardo, 64, of Scarborough, said he couldn't continue supporting Platner after the allegation, though he still has a sign promoting the candidate at the end of his driveway. He called the accusation "disappointing" as well as "indisputably sincere," and said the party needs to get to work finding a replacement.

The scenario reminded Attardo of the hasty replacement of Joe Biden during the 2024 election campaign.

"We rally behind somebody, and not unlike the Biden administration, when everybody rallied behind Joe Biden, at the eleventh hour that failed," he said. "I sort of feel we're in a similar boat."

Bonnie Tyler, who topped the charts with epic 'Total Eclipse of the Heart,' has died at 75

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Bonnie Tyler, the gravelly voiced, Grammy-nominated Welsh pop star whose 1983 chart-topping power ballad "Total Eclipse of the Heart" enchanted succeeding generations with its bombastic charms during solar and lunar eclipses, has died. She was 75.

Tyler died unexpectedly in a hospital in Portugal where she was being treated for an illness, her family said Thursday in a statement on her website. She was hospitalized in May in Faro, where she had a home, for emergency intestinal surgery. She had been placed in an induced coma for a period but was reportedly improving last month and expected to make a good recovery.

"Bonnie's family and team are heartbroken to announce that Bonnie unexpectedly passed away last night in hospital in Portugal as a result of the illness that she was being treated for," her family said.

Tyler earned three Grammy nods and in 2013 represented Britain at the Eurovision Song Contest, where she came in 19th. She was honored as a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 2022 for her services to music by Queen Elizabeth II, thanks mainly to "Total Eclipse of the Heart," which has had more than 1 billion streams, boosted by real eclipses in 2017 and 2024.

The song spent four weeks at No. 1, and when Stereogum reevaluated it in 2020, the music outlet declared it an "extinction-level event rendered in musical form."

"It's pop music as heart-pounding, chest-thumping, blood-gargling, heavens-falling passion explosion. It's sheer spectacle. It's fireworks and lasers and lightning and thunder. It soars and swoops and barrel-rolls," the site said.

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The song has never really gone away: it was covered by the English singer Nicki French in 1995, and the band Westlife in 2006. Cate Blanchett sang it while hitting Billy Bob Thornton with her car in 2001's "Bandits," it appeared in a wedding scene in 2003's "Old School" and One Direction sang it in 2010 on a U.K. version of "The X Factor."

Early life

Tyler was born — as Gaynor Hopkins — a coal miner's daughter in public housing with an outside toilet in Skewen, Wales, about 7 miles (11 kilometers) outside Swansea. She grew up with three sisters and two brothers.

She adored the Beatles and her first album was "A Hard Day's Night." The first song she bought, at 13, was "Hippy Hippy Shake" by the Swinging Blue Jeans and she watched "Top of the Pops" religiously, according to her memoir, "Straight From the Heart."

She would record "Top of the Pops" on a reel-to-reel two-track recorder and write down the lyrics of songs she loved. Her favorites were by Janis Joplin, Nina Simone, Tina Turner, Wilson Pickett and Otis Redding.

"I used to sing them into my hairbrush for hours and hours, and that's how it all started for me. I fell in love with singing just from doing that. Looking back, even then my voice had a husky tone to it, but I didn't think much of it. I thought everyone's voices were different from each other's," she wrote.

In 1976 she had to have surgery to remove nodules on her throat, leaving her with that trademark vocal sound. Changing her name to Sherene Davis, she was fronting a soul band when she was discovered by talent scout Roger Bell, who brought her to London for demo sessions. Then she waited for a label until RCA said it was interested.

Under her new RCA-sanctioned name Bonnie Tyler, her debut album "The World Starts Tonight" in 1977 contained her first chart hit, "Lost in France," and she was nominated for a breakthrough artists award at the Brit Awards. She then had a No. 3 hit in 1978 with "It's a Heartache," but soon drifted. She then signed with Sony and saw Meat Loaf perform "Bat Out of Hell" on the BBC. Impressed, she requested to work with Meat Loaf songwriter and producer Jim Steinman.

'Total Eclipse of the Heart'

Steinman introduced her to his song "Total Eclipse of the Heart," which would become the debut single for her fifth studio album, "Faster Than the Speed of Night." He borrowed one of the song's lyrics — "Turn around, bright eyes" — from his 1969 musical "The Dream Engine," written when he was a student at Massachusetts' Amherst College. He told her the song was from a prospective musical version of "Nosferatu."

"Jim liked to put down a basic rhythm track, do nine takes of the song, choose the best one and then put the kitchen sink on there, like Phil Spector used to," Tyler told The Guardian in 2023. "He gave me a cassette to listen to in my hotel and we both preferred take two."

Featuring E Street Band members Roy Bittan on piano and Max Weinberg on drums, "Total Eclipse" is a rumination on lost love: "Once upon a time there was light in my life/But now there's only love in the dark," she sings.

The video, a staple of early-days MTV, was shot in a frightening gothic former asylum in Surrey, where the guard dogs apparently wouldn't set foot in the rooms downstairs where they used to give people electric shock treatment. The visuals included slow-motion tossed doves, candles, dancing ninjas, dancing greasers, Tyler in frighteningly big shoulder pads, fencers, gymnasts, wind machines and shirtless boys wearing swim goggles being doused with water.

"Faster Than the Speed of Night" earned a Grammy nomination for best rock vocal performance — losing to Pat Benatar's "Love Is a Battlefield" — and Tyler got another nod for "Total Eclipse of the Heart" in the best pop vocal performance category, losing to Irene Cara's "Flashdance — What a Feeling."

After the 'Eclipse'

Tyler never reached such dizzying heights again but stayed current with such movie soundtrack singles as "Holding Out For a Hero" — from 1984's "Footloose" — and "Here She Comes" from "Metropolis" also in 1984.

Her 2019 disc "Between the Earth and the Stars" featured duets with Rod Stewart, Cliff Richard and Status

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Quo's Francis Rossi, and she ended that year performing a Vatican Christmas concert before Pope Francis.

In 2013, she switched gears to make a country-flavored record in Nashville, "Rocks and Honey," which included the Vince Gill duet "What You Need From Me" and a little ballad called "Believe in Me," written by American songwriter Desmond Child and British songwriters Lauren Christy and Christopher Braide. "Believe in Me" was picked to represent the United Kingdom at that year's Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden.

"It was an absolutely wonderful atmosphere there," she told the San Francisco Examiner in 2023. "I was being interviewed every 15, 20 minutes, and when I walked out onstage behind the British flag, I thought the roof was going to come off! It was awesome, just awesome!"

In 2017, she joined Joe Jonas' band DNCE for a performance on the cruise ship Oasis of the Seas as part of a "Total Eclipse Cruise." When the moon passed in front of the sun, they played "Total Eclipse of the Heart."

Tyler was married to property developer and former Olympic judo competitor Robert Sullivan.

Today in History: July 10 The Battle of Britain begins in World War II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 10, the 191st day of 2026. There are 174 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 10, 1940, during World War II, the Battle of Britain began as the German Luftwaffe launched attacks on southern England. (The Royal Air Force was ultimately victorious.)

Also on this date:

In 1509, theologian John Calvin, a key figure of the Protestant Reformation, was born in Noyon, Picardy, France.

In 1890, Wyoming was admitted as the 44th US state.

In 1925, jury selection began in Dayton, Tennessee, in the trial of John T. Scopes, charged with violating the law by teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution. (Scopes was convicted and fined, but the verdict was overturned on a technicality.)

In 1929, American paper currency was reduced in size as the government began issuing bills that were approximately 25% smaller.

In 1951, armistice talks aimed at ending the Korean War began at Kaesong.

In 1962, the first active communications satellite, Telstar 1, was launched by NASA.

In 1985, the Greenpeace protest ship Rainbow Warrior was sunk with explosives in Auckland, New Zealand, by French intelligence agents; one activist was killed.

In 1991, Boris N. Yeltsin took the oath of office as the first elected president of the Russian republic.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush lifted U.S. economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 2002, the U.S. House approved a measure to allow airline pilots to carry guns in the cockpit to defend their planes against terrorists (President George W. Bush later signed the measure into law).

In 2015, South Carolina pulled the Confederate battle flag from its place of honor at the Statehouse after more than 50 years.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Mavis Staples is 87. Actor Robert Pine is 85. International Tennis Hall of Famer Virginia Wade is 81. Folk singer Arlo Guthrie is 79. Baseball Hall of Famer Andre Dawson is 72. Rock singer Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) is 72. Banjo player Bela Fleck is 68. Actor Fiona Shaw is 68. Singer/actor Jacky Cheung is 65. Actor Alec Mapa is 61. Country singer Gary LeVox (leh-VOH') (Rascal Flatts) is 56. Actor Sofia Vergara is 54. Actor Adrian Grenier (grehn-YAY') is 50. Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor (CHOO'-ih-tehl EHJ'-ee-oh-for) is 49. Actor Thomas Ian Nicholas is 46. Singer/actor Jessica Simpson is 46. Actor Emily Skeggs is 36. Pop singer Perrie Edwards (Little Mix) is 33. Actor Isabela Merced is 25.