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Saturday, July 11

Northern Plains Softball U10 Softball Tournament in Aberdeen.

Northern Plains Softball U12 Softball Tournament in Aberdeen.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Sunday, July 12

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Northern Plains Softball U14 Softball Tournament in Groton.

Historic 1912 Jail Open House, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 315 E. 4th Ave., Groton.

Monday, July 13

Senior Menu: Ground beef stroganoff with noodles, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Junior Legion hosts Sisseton, 5:30 p.m., DH.

Senior Citizens meeting at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

JVT Practice, 6 p.m., GHS Arena.

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

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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.

Ancient Tapestry Relocates

An 11th-century tapestry arrived at London's British Museum yesterday after a covert, high-security operation, marking the first time it has left France in nearly 1,000 years.

The Bayeux Tapestry traveled roughly 350 miles overnight by truck and train in a climate-controlled, vibration-dampening crate. Stitched in wool thread on linen, the 230-foot-long embroidery depicts the lead up to William, Duke of Normandy's, 1066 invasion of England—an event that solidified lasting ties between Britain and France.

Historians believe the piece was made in England and then sent to William's half brother in France, where it has since remained. British officials have asked to borrow it since the 1950s, but France repeatedly refused, citing its fragility. (A recent report found it has 24,204 stains, 9,646 holes, and 30 tears.) French President Emmanuel Macron ultimately approved the loan in 2018 as a gesture of trust and friendship.

The Bayeux Tapestry will be on display in London from Sept. 10, 2026, through July 11, 2027. The British Museum has already generated about \$3.3M in ticket sales.

Apple sues OpenAI for alleged trade secrets theft.

The iPhone maker filed a lawsuit yesterday, accusing two former employees who went to work for OpenAI of stealing confidential information. One of the defendants is OpenAI's chief hardware officer, Tang Tan, who previously oversaw product design for the iPhone and Apple Watch. He is now leading the AI company's efforts to develop its own devices. The other defendant is a member of OpenAI's technical staff. As of this writing, neither OpenAI nor the defendants have commented.

Bipartisan housing bill to become law without Trump's signature.

President Donald Trump yesterday let a 10-day deadline to veto or sign a landmark housing affordability bill lapse, meaning the measure will become law without his signature. Trump had canceled plans to sign the bill last month in an attempt to pressure the Senate into passing legislation creating stricter voter ID rules, which he argues are a higher priority. The voter ID bill remains stalled in the Senate.

UK police arrest suspect in killing of a former Parliament member.

A 26-year-old British man was arrested yesterday on suspicion of murdering Ann Widdecombe, a 78-year-old Conservative minister turned TV personality. She was found dead in her home Thursday with serious injuries. Officials have not shared a motive as of this writing, but they said there is no evidence the crime was politically motivated or terror-related.

Foodborne parasite spreads across the US, hospitalizing dozens.

Nearly 3,000 people in 31 states have cyclosporiasis, a gastrointestinal illness marked by severe diarrhea, according to local health departments. Michigan, which typically sees 40 to 50 cases per year, leads the nation with 1,562 cases, as of yesterday. The federal government has confirmed 86 hospitalizations, as officials race to pinpoint the source and determine if outbreaks across states are connected. The parasite has historically been traced to fresh produce.

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Wimbledon winners will be crowned this weekend.

Karolína Muchová and Linda Nosková face off in the first-ever all-Czech women's grand slam final at 11 am ET. It will be the first time two women representing the same country have competed in a grand slam final match since Americans Sloane Stephens and Madison Keys in 2017. Then, tomorrow, defending men's singles champion Jannik Sinner of Italy will take on Germany's Alexander Zverev.

Major League Baseball draft begins today.

The top high school and college baseball prospects are hoping to secure spots on one of the MLB's 30 teams today and tomorrow. The Chicago White Sox have the No. 1 pick for the first time in 49 years after winning the annual lottery this winter. They are reportedly considering UCLA shortstop Roch Cholewicki, high school shortstop Grady Emerson, and Georgia Tech catcher Vahn Lackey.

Pentagon releases new batch of UFO files.

The fourth batch of files posted on the government's UFO website includes 14 documents, 19 videos, four audio files, and three images from several federal agencies. One document details a 2015 incursion by an unidentified object over a Texas nuclear weapons facility that led to a lockdown. More releases are expected in the coming months.

Scientists uncover earliest evidence of behavioral right-handedness.

Animals have favored their right side for over half a billion years, according to fossils of a limbless, leech-like creature. About twice as many fossils show the ancient arthropods bent to the right rather than the left. While it's still unclear why creatures—including humans—tend to favor their right side, favoring a side may have offered evolutionary benefits, such as faster decision-making when fleeing predators.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Matt K. in Maine.

"My neighbor and I disagree vehemently about almost everything: religion, politics, sexuality, etc. But when I had a water leak, he came over and helped me replace all the damaged flooring. (More accurately, he did most of the work and I helped!) That's what real community is."

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* ★

Groton Post 39 14U sweeps Aberdeen Smitty's in Friday doubleheader

Groton Post 39 14U earned a doubleheader sweep over Aberdeen Smitty's on Friday in Groton, using timely hitting, aggressive baserunning and two strong pitching performances to claim 10-2 and 12-6 victories.

In the opener, Groton collected 10 hits while breaking the game open with a six-run fourth inning.

Trayce Schelle paced the offense, going a perfect 3-for-3 with a triple, two singles and multiple stolen bases. He singled in the first inning, tripled in the second and added another single in the fourth.

Groton scored first in the opening inning when Keegan Kiesz hit a sacrifice fly to plate the game's first run. The lead grew in the second after Schelle's triple and an Aberdeen error produced two more runs.

The decisive fourth inning featured contributions throughout the lineup. Easton Lien drove in two runs with a single, Tucker Leicht added a two-run sacrifice fly, Bentley Englund drew a bases-loaded walk, and Owen Tietz also worked a bases-loaded walk to force home another run.

Kyson Kiesz earned the win, allowing just one run on no hits over three innings while striking out two and walking four. Keegan Kiesz pitched in relief to help finish off the victory.

Asher Zimmerman and Lien each collected two hits for Groton, while Schelle and Lien each stole multiple bases as Post 39 swiped nine bases during the contest. Groton also turned a double play defensively.

The nightcap featured even more excitement.

After Aberdeen jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the top of the first inning, Groton answered immediately with six runs in the bottom half and never looked back.

The comeback began with RBI singles from Keegan Kiesz, Schelle, Kyson Kiesz and Mason Luvaas as Groton stormed in front 6-5 after one inning.

Post 39 added two more runs in the second when Kyson Kiesz tripled down the left-field line and Luvaas later drew a walk that forced home another run. Groton continued to build its advantage in the third, highlighted by Schelle's RBI triple to center field that helped extend the lead to 11-5.

Bentley Englund picked up the complete-game victory, allowing six runs—three earned—on seven hits over five innings while striking out two.

Groton pounded out 11 hits in the second game. Schelle again led the offense, finishing 2-for-3 with three RBIs. Keegan Kiesz, Schelle, Kyson Kiesz and Luvaas each had two hits. Keegan Kiesz, Schelle, Zimmerman and Luvaas all stole multiple bases as Groton finished with 12 stolen bases. The defense also turned another double play.

The doubleheader sweep showcased Groton's balanced lineup, with contributions throughout the batting order, while Schelle's five-hit day, the pitching efforts of Kyson Kiesz and Englund, and the team's speed on the bases proved to be the difference as Post 39 improved with two convincing victories over Aberdeen Smitty's.



Mason Locke as catcher. (Photo courtesy

Karen Rose)

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GFP Commission Holds July Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their July meeting at the Galley in Webster, July 9-10.

FINALIZATIONS

Definition of a Buck Deer and Bull Elk Antler

The Commission finalized a clean-up to remove “polished antler” and replace with “antler” from the definition of a buck and bull to allow an individual to harvest a velvet antlered deer or elk.

Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons

The Commission made several changes to the spring and fall turkey seasons.

For the Spring Turkey Season, references to federal property closures were removed from administrative rule and the Day and Codington County combined unit was separated into county specific units for Day (PST-22A) and Codington (PST-05A) counties.

Changes to the Fall Turkey Season include a weapons restriction change allowing for the use of rifles or shotguns for hunting turkeys in the fall for all units, except for Minnehaha County. In addition, the changes to fall turkey unit boundaries will result in the same Spring and Fall turkey unit boundaries for all units, except for the Black Hills.

The Commission closed Bennett and Sanborn counties to spring firearm turkey hunting. The Commission closed Gregory and Mellette counties to fall turkey hunting and opened Hughes County. All spring and fall turkey hunting season unit license numbers were finalized.

Tagging and Transportation of Shooting Preserve Harvested Pheasants

The Commission adopted additional allowances for the transportation of harvested birds from a private shooting preserve directly to a lodge or cleaning facility not located on permitted acres prior to tagging. This finalization is the result of a public petition.

PROPOSALS

Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations

The Commission proposed to add golden mussels to the current list of Aquatic Invasive Species. Currently, golden mussels have established populations in western North America and are spreading east. They have similar effects as zebra mussels. They are not in South Dakota at this time.

The Commission also proposed to exclude phragmites species from types of vegetation that can be used as blind material on boats when being launched or trailered. Phragmites could be used as blind material, but cannot be transported from the waterbody.

Bait Regulations

The Commission proposed to remove the requirement to submit an annual summary of bait harvested for resident bait dealers. Resident bait dealers who trap their own bait would still be required to maintain daily records of bait trapped.

Muskellunge Limits

The Commission proposed to modify the daily and possession limit of muskellunge and northern-muskellunge (tiger) cross from catch and release to 1 daily, 2 in possession with a 45-inch minimum length limit for inland waters.

Fishing Tournaments

The Commission proposed to modify the dates when a fishing tournament cannot occur to clarify fishing tournaments cannot occur on the Friday of the 4th of July weekend, if the 4th falls on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday.

Fish Pathogens

The Commission proposed to update the list of fish pathogens of regulatory concern used for fish importation permit requirements. This change would reduce the regulatory burden on importers and suppliers by reducing the number of pathogens that must be tested for. The proposed changes reflect current fish

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health standards and disease risk assessments while maintaining safeguards to prevent the introduction of significant fish pathogens into South Dakota waters.

Paddlefish Transportation

The Commission proposed to modify the transportation requirements for paddlefish harvested during the archery season below Gavins Point Dam to allow for harvested paddlefish to be cleaned, including removal of the head, skin and tail, prior to transport.

Bobcat Hunting Season

The Commission proposed the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Bobcat Hunting Season with no recommended changes to administrative rule from past years. With no changes to rule, the current season structure will be retained.

Endangered and Threatened Species

The Commission proposed to remove the Eskimo curlew and Least tern from the list of endangered birds. The Eskimo curlew is believed to be extinct throughout its range. The last confirmed observation occurred in Barbados in 1963, and there are no records of the species in the South Dakota Nongame Conservation Database.

The Least tern was removed from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species in 2021. In South Dakota, Least terns have been monitored annually for more than 30 years, and recovery criteria have been met for multiple consecutive years, including the most recent monitoring period.

Public Comments Being Accepted

To hear the discussion on these topics, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these topics in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CDT on Sept. 6.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Winner, September 10-11.

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BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS

COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes*
4. Chris Hemen, Weed & Pest Supervisor
 - a. Bid Opening for 4x4 Chassis or Flatbed Truck
5. Richmond Dam Update
6. First Reading of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #328 – Rezone for Stanley & Carol Gage
 - b. Ord. #329 – Amending Title 4 Zoning
 - c. Ord. #330 – Amending Title 5 Subdivision Regulations
7. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Department of Health 2027 Contract
8. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks
 - a. Approval of Brown County Fair Promotional Ticket List
 - b. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign 4-H Premium Sponsor Contract
 - c. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Fran Romeo Agency – Talent Booking Contract
 - d. Department Updates
9. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. R-O-W for LTS Telecommunication
 - b. R-O-W for Northern Electric
 - c. Department Update
10. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of July 7, 2026
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Lease Agreements
 - e. Lottery Permit for Brown County 4-H Leaders
11. Other Business
12. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
13. Adjourn

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

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

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

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

BUDGET WORK SESSION/MEETINGS

Lyman County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: S.D. Highway 248 at mile marker 257, 2 miles east of Lyman, South Dakota

When: 6:47 p.m., Thursday, July 9, 2026

Driver 1: 63-year-old female from Reliance, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 1998 Suzuki VDD51TON mini truck

Seat Belt Used: No

Driver 2: 57-year-old male from Reliance, South Dakota, minor injuries

Vehicle 2: 2006 Freightliner semi-truck

Seat Belt Used: No

Lyman County, S.D.- A Reliance, South Dakota woman died Thursday in a two-vehicle crash near Lyman, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 1998 Suzuki VDD51TON mini truck was traveling southbound on 324th Avenue. At the same time, a 2006 Freightliner semi-truck was traveling westbound on S.D. Highway 248. The driver of the Suzuki entered the intersection without stopping and collided with the Freightliner. She was ejected from the vehicle and sustained fatal injuries. The driver of the freightliner was taken to a Chamberlain hospital with minor injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

Land for Sale

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

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www.keminklandco.com**



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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Water quality buffer program grows following \$8 million boost from lawmakers BY JOSHUA HAIAR

A state program that pays landowners to plant vegetation along streams now has 130 buffer projects spanning 379 miles of shoreline statewide, and more landowners are waiting to enroll.

The update, presented Friday to the Game, Fish and Parks Commission, comes months after state lawmakers approved an additional \$8 million to expand the program statewide.

The initiative is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It pays landowners to establish grassy buffers along eligible waterways. That reduces erosion, filters pollutants and improves wildlife habitat while allowing continued agricultural use, explained Dan Nelson, a private lands habitat biologist with the department.

"It's not a land retirement program," Nelson said. He described it as a "working buffer" program. Landowners keep cattle off the enrolled acres from May 1 to Sept. 30, and can't mow or bail hay from May 1 to Aug. 1.

He shared that the 130 projects are along 118 streams, mostly within the Big Sioux River watershed, and 19 lakes for a total of 3,984 acres enrolled. The buffer contracts run 10 years, and buffers must be at least 50 feet wide.

Nelson did not have annual enrollment figures, but said interest is strong enough that "many projects" are awaiting approval.

The Legislature created the Riparian Buffer Initiative in 2021 as a voluntary effort to reduce agricultural runoff into rivers and streams — particularly the Big Sioux River, which runs through Sioux Falls.

The program initially struggled to attract participants, with only 35 projects established by late 2024. Enrollment accelerated when the state increased payouts.

The state now pays 250% of the average rate a farmer pays to rent an acre of farmland in their county for one year. The entire 10-year payment is made upfront and covers many of the costs of establishing



A section of Blue Dog Lake shoreline before and after the implementation of a South Dakota state government program paying for buffer strips to improve water quality. The program covered the Big Sioux River watershed. (Photos courtesy of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources)

the buffer.

"The payments are pretty incredible," Nelson said.

Nelson highlighted several projects during Friday's meeting. One showed how land that returned to row-crop production after being enrolled in a conservation program experienced severe erosion, including a roughly 25-foot-deep ravine carved by water that carried soil downstream.

Goose depredation mitigation

Another project used buffers to reduce crop damage from geese by separating fields from waterways, where resident geese congregate during their summer molting season. The buffer made it harder for the birds to walk into fields to feed.

Canada geese are a growing concern in eastern South Dakota, the commission would also learn during Friday's meeting. Wildlife officials have received 358 requests for assistance this year and installed 409 temporary electric fences to protect crops. Department Wildlife Director Tom Kirschenmann said that work annually costs the department upwards of \$300,000.

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

South Dakota not liable for sinkhole under neighborhood, justices rule

The state held onto mineral rights for an old mine beneath their homes. The high court decided that's not enough to justify homeowners' claims.

BY JOHN HULT

Homeowners in Black Hawk whose properties were damaged by a sinkhole are not entitled to compensation from the state, the South Dakota Supreme Court ruled Friday.

The 30-foot-deep sinkhole yawned open in April 2020 in a neighborhood called Hide-away Hills, which was built on land reclaimed after a gypsum mine closed. It was the largest sinkhole to appear in the development. The first appeared in 2008.

Thirteen houses were evacuated, and homeowners learned they had been built on unstable ground. Other homeowners also saw damage to their properties.

The mine first opened in the western part of the state more than 100 years ago and was initially a private operation with



A spring 2020 view of a sinkhole in Black Hawk that opened near homes built atop a former gypsum mine. (Courtesy of Dan Austin)

a vast network of underground tunnels for gypsum mining.

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It was later purchased by South Dakota and mined for gypsum to send to the state cement plant but was only mined on the surface. Sixteen acres of the land were eventually reseeded, reclaimed and sold in 1994.

The family that bought those acres and the partnering developer disclosed the underground mining history to the homebuilders, according to the Supreme Court's ruling. But the homebuyers were not made aware of that history.

Multiple lawsuits against Meade County, the land's developers and the realtor who represented the homebuilders were dismissed.

In a separate lawsuit against the state, homeowners representing 164 properties argued that the state put them at risk when it failed to properly backfill the land, and that the failure amounted to an unjust "taking" of their private property for the public use of mining. They also alleged the state reopened tunnels in search of more gypsum, which the state denied.

A lower court ruled against the homeowners, saying the lawsuit was about liability for poor reclamation.

The circuit court agreed with the state, which asserted that it's immune from liability claims under the state constitution.

The homeowners appealed.

The Supreme Court once again ruled in favor of the state but for a slightly different reason.

The state is not immune from liability when it takes private property for public use, the justices ruled, and the state constitution includes damage to property in its definition of "taking." Under the state constitution, any taking by the government for a public use requires just compensation.

The issue, the justices ruled, is that there was no taking. The state owned the land in the 1980s, when it conducted surface mining in the area and reclaimed the land that would eventually become Hideaway Hills. Nothing the state did impacted private property.

The homeowners argued that the state maintained subsurface mineral rights to the land when it sold the property.

The homeowners' lawyers wrote in their court filings that since it's possible for mining to resume at some point in the future, the state had an "ongoing duty" to maintain the subsurface integrity of the land.

The justices rejected that argument. The homeowners "failed to show any general public benefit from the state's ownership of the mining rights."

"We acknowledge the devastating and sympathetic circumstances," the justices wrote, but the homeowners don't have a legal claim to assert that would open the door to questions of liability and responsibility for the state.

Michael Beardsley, the South Dakota attorney representing the homeowners, did not return a message for comment on Friday.

Terra Larson, who represented the state, said "the court's decision resolves the legal issues presented in this case."

"The state thanks the court for their hard work and coming to a well-reasoned decision, and conclusion consistent with what the South Dakota Constitution dictates," Larson said in a statement.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Incarcerated women to move into new Rapid City prison to alleviate overcrowding

South Dakota officials say prison will include vocational training, mother-infant housing and drug treatment

BY JOHN HULT

Incarcerated women will start moving into a new \$87 million prison in Rapid City next month, a South Dakota Department of Corrections spokesperson confirmed this week.

The medium-security prison will be the state's second for women. The South Dakota Women's Prison in Pierre has operated beyond its capacity for years, with dozens of people serving their sentences at the Hughes County Jail or in halfway house facilities.

The new prison in Rapid City, which was approved by state lawmakers in 2023, will add 288 beds to the state's capacity. The Department of Corrections will begin transferring women there next month, according to spokesperson Michael Winder, who said the exact date of full operations won't be released for security reasons.

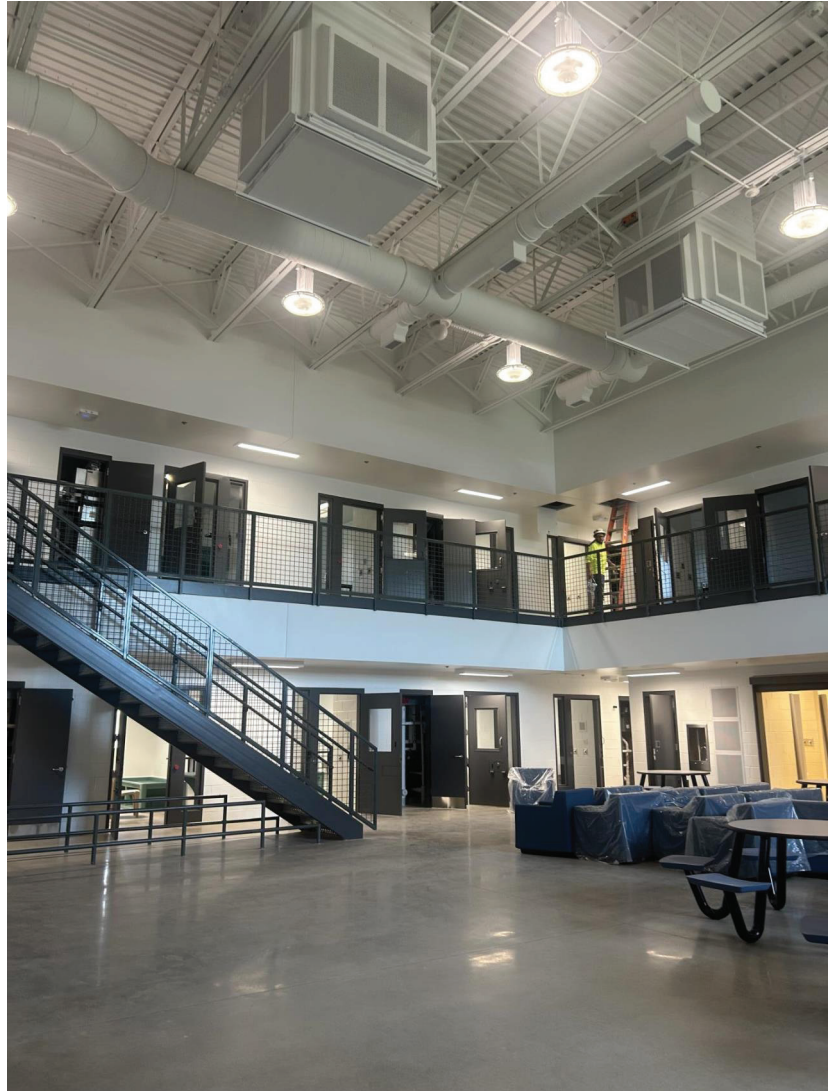
The prison includes a work release area, a mother-infant building that lets new moms stay in a home-like environment with their babies, a vocational training facility to be staffed by instructors from Western Dakota Technical Institute and 96 beds for chemical dependency treatment.

The majority of the women held in South Dakota prisons are incarcerated on nonviolent drug charges, and 97% have a substance use disorder diagnosis.

"Drug addiction is a disease that must be treated," Corrections Secretary Nick Lamb said at Friday's ribbon cutting, adding that "Through dedicated treatment space and the therapeutic community, women will receive the counseling support and skills that they need to break the cycle of addiction and successfully return to their families and communities."

The mother-infant program mirrors one launched a few years ago in Pierre.

Mothers who qualify under security guidelines stay in a group home separate from the main prison facility with other women and children for the first few years of their child's life. The program was launched by former Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko and was championed by Lamb in his first public conversations with lawmakers on the state's budget committee during the 2026 legislative session.



A housing unit at the new women's prison in Rapid City, SD. Women will begin moving into the facility in August. (courtesy South Dakota Department of Corrections)

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At Friday's event, Gov. Larry Rhoden said family connections and parenting skills are key factors in rehabilitation. He framed the program as an extension of a commitment to the well-being of South Dakota families.

"This program gives mothers and their children the opportunity to build that foundation from the very beginning," Rhoden said.

Rhoden also called out the vocational training, drug treatment and work release programs as vital to rehabilitation — and to public safety by extension. The state recently broke ground on a new \$650 million men's prison in Sioux Falls, which is set to replace the state penitentiary and is also designed to expand programming and rehabilitation.

When combined with pending policy recommendations from the state's correctional rehabilitation task force, Rhoden said, the new prisons will help improve public safety statewide by reducing the number of people who return to prison within a few years of their release.

"At the end of the day, every person in our corrections system is a human being," Rhoden said. "They are sons and daughters. They are mothers and fathers. People who've made mistakes but also have the capacity to change."

Winder, the corrections spokesman, told South Dakota Searchlight that staff will spend the next few weeks training at the new facility in preparation for the arrival of inmates in August.

The state hired Eric Aldridge to serve as warden in March. Aldridge, who came to South Dakota after a stint as warden of a medium-security women's prison in Troy, Virginia, said Friday his goal is to "to facilitate an environment, an atmosphere, a culture where people learn, they grow, they heal, and where people develop through dignity and respect."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

COMMENTARY

One number can't define South Dakota's economy

Candidates for governor should be held to higher standard for intellectual honesty

by Brad Johnson

Leadership begins with intellectual honesty—the basic skill of describing reality before claiming the authority to fix it.

Anyone asking to lead South Dakota should first demonstrate the ability to read a chart without turning it into performance art.

Which is why a recent claim by gubernatorial candidate Toby Doeden deserves a closer look.

This week, Doeden wrote on Facebook that "South Dakota ranks dead last in economic growth for the entire nation."

That is a dramatic statement.

It also contains a grain of truth—enough to season his posts, but not enough to justify them.

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that South Dakota posted the nation's lowest real GDP growth (-1.6%) in the first quarter of 2026, driven largely by declines in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting.

That is a real number.

It is also a single quarter.

One quarter earlier, South Dakota ranked second (+3.0%) in the nation. Agriculture-heavy states can swing sharply as commodity prices, production cycles and export markets shift. Anyone familiar with the industry knows this.

A quarterly GDP report is a snapshot—valuable, but incomplete.

That distinction matters.

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Words matter.

Especially when they come from someone asking to become governor.

The first-quarter GDP report isn't the only measure of South Dakota's vitality.

Another source is the State of the Nation Project's South Dakota Economy page, which ranks South Dakota 50th in its Economy category.

Ironically, the same report ranks South Dakota first in Work and Labor Force, first in Civil Liberties and sixth in Social Capital. Its Economy category is based primarily on output and productivity, not a blanket declaration that South Dakota is an economic wasteland.

Even the report most helpful to Doeden's argument doesn't flatten South Dakota into a single number. It stops short of suggesting that one ranking defines South Dakota. Those seeking to lead it should show the same restraint.

Other respected organizations reach different conclusions because they ask different questions. The U.S. News Best States rankings place South Dakota among the nation's top-performing states overall. The Tax Foundation's State Tax Competitiveness Index consistently ranks South Dakota among the best business tax climates. Other national scorecards highlight fiscal stability, employment strength and business competitiveness.

None of these rankings prove South Dakota has a flawless economy or erase the concerns raised by the BEA's first-quarter report.

Together, they demonstrate something more important: the answer depends on which question you're asking.

No single statistic can answer them all.

Agriculture is under strain. Commodity prices remain weak. Input costs remain high. Tariffs have created uncertainty in export markets. Geopolitical instability contributed to higher fuel prices. Farmers and ranchers are making difficult decisions, and those pressures ripple through equipment dealers, lenders, manufacturers and Main Street businesses across the state.

Those are serious challenges that deserve serious solutions.

But they are not the whole story.

South Dakota continues to maintain one of the nation's lowest unemployment rates. Employers report thousands of open jobs. Sales tax collections exceed both last year's pace and legislative forecasts.

Ellsworth Air Force Base is undergoing the largest expansion in its history. Sioux Falls continues to attract investment, while manufacturing, health care and construction projects move forward across the state.

This is not an economy without challenges. It is an economy with strengths and weaknesses—like every



Toby Doeden, left, and Gov. Larry Rhoden deliver speeches to the South Dakota Republican Convention on June 26, 2026, at The Monument events center in Rapid City. (Photos by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

other state. That's why reducing it to a single statistic doesn't help voters understand it.

It mistakes one indicator for the whole economy.

South Dakota's economy is built every morning by manufacturers opening their doors, farmers climbing into tractors, contractors heading to job sites, retailers serving customers, lenders financing new ventures and entrepreneurs willing to risk everything on an idea.

Those South Dakotans deserve leaders who describe their work as honestly as they perform it.

Because governors don't have the luxury of governing by slogans. They have to govern by facts.

The higher the office, the higher the standard.

Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.

Trump guts election commission in move seen as increasing his sway over midterms

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's latest shot in a relentless war on how elections are conducted has triggered enormous concern among voting rights activists.

As of Thursday night, the U.S Election Assistance Commission has no members. The White House in an email dismissed Democrats Thomas Hicks and Benjamin Hovland. Republican Christy McCormick resigned, and GOP member Donald Palmer left earlier this year.

Trump's move guts, for now, a four-member board created in 2002 after the chaos that dogged the 2000 presidential election. That result came down to the vote count in Florida, where the question was debated of whether "hanging chads" on ballots counted or not.

The commission legislation, signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002, is designed to have



A mail-in ballot dropbox on P Street Northwest in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, June 16, 2026. (Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

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the panel help states establish credible voter registration and voting systems.

Activists saw Trump's sudden firings as the latest, and perhaps most ominous, chapter in his efforts to influence elections in a way opponents say is meant to help his party in the fall midterms.

To them, it becomes part of a growing list that includes extraordinary congressional map-drawing in Republican-leaning states, a fierce effort to require voters to provide photo ID and proof of citizenship and the Supreme Court's curtailing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

"Here we go again," said a joint statement by Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., and Rep. Joe Morelle, D-New York., after the commission decision became public. They're the top Democrats on the congressional committees that deal with election law.

"Purging commissioners just months before the midterm elections and further gutting support for our state and local elections officials is a blatant part of his plan to politicize our elections and enable more unlawful and dangerous election interference," they said.

The White House insisted it is interested only in a fair election.

"The Administration from the start has been working across all agencies and local partners to safeguard elections from fraud and abuse, and investing in a strong infrastructure to sustain that mission especially in the midterm elections," a White House official who asked not to be named told States Newsroom in an email.

Trump's election orders

To skeptics, Trump's latest action was part of an ongoing push to influence election procedures – an effort unheard of in modern times for an incumbent president – that shows no signs of abating.

The election commission would not alter the national voter registration form as Trump wanted so that it would include proof of citizenship. Trump issued an executive order requiring proof of citizenship for voters, but a federal judge blocked the effort, saying states and Congress had that authority.

He is also attempting to restrict voting by mail. The Supreme Court last month rejected a bid to bar mail votes from being counted after Election Day. The votes can count as long as they are postmarked by that day.

But the administration is trying another court challenge, aimed at preserving Trump's executive order telling federal agencies to come up with a national list of documented adult U.S. citizens who could then vote.

The order would also have the U.S. Postal Service establish a system for dealing with mail-in votes from the approved lists. A federal judge has blocked the order. The case could wind up at the Supreme Court later this year.

Can the SAVE America Act be saved?

On Capitol Hill, when Congress returns to work Monday from the Fourth of July recess, House lawmakers will confront how or whether to proceed with the SAVE America Act, Trump's bid to require voters to show identification and proof of citizenship.

The legislation is expected to go nowhere, since it needs 60 votes in the Senate, which has 47 members who caucus with the Democrats.

Trump, though, has put enormous pressure on supporters to move the bill. "THE SAVE AMERICA ACT'S non-passage is CRAZY, and a serious threat to any politician who votes against it!" he wrote on Truth Social Friday. He explained he will not sign a housing reform bill, which passed Congress by big bipartisan margins last month, in protest. Without his signature, the bill will become law anyway at 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

The SAVE America Act has paralyzed the House, as supporters refused to let members consider any other legislation until the chamber passes the act.

Trump has been moving on other fronts. His administration backed a successful challenge to a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a law that tore down decades-old barriers that kept minority voters in the South from voting and gaining political clout.

The president also energized movements across conservative states to redraw congressional district lines, normally done after censuses in years ending in zero.

Instead, eight states, including Texas, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio and

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Missouri have adjusted their maps this year in ways expected to help Republicans.

California and Utah have redrawn maps to create more potential Democratic seats. But all the changes, said the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, have created "a Republican advantage of some size."

Trump's initiatives have sparked bitterness for and against.

"Democracy doesn't disappear overnight, it erodes piece by piece. SCOTUS weakens voting rights. Trump guts the bipartisan Election Assistance Commission and pushes the SAVE America Act to choke voter registration and fair elections. We cannot stay silent. We must resist," Rep. Analilia Mejia, D-N.J., said on X.

Rep. Abe Hamadeh, R-Ariz., applauded Trump's latest action.

"President Trump is right to clean house at the Election Assistance Commission," Hamadeh said on X.

"For too long, it has enabled weak standards & defended vulnerable machines that fueled irregularities in 2020 & 2022. Rather than address legitimate concerns with transparency & accountability, the EAC circled the wagons & politicized a sacred nonpartisan process," he said.

Rigged elections?

At the heart of all these efforts is Trump's long-held view that elections are too often rigged. He made that claim after losing in 2020, despite no evidence of much if any fraud.

Most recently, he alleged rigging in the Los Angeles mayoral primary, where Republican Spencer Pratt failed to advance, topped by two Democrats. Again, there's been no evidence of wrongdoing.

The independent Election Assistance Commission that Trump gutted helped in establishing the credibility of elections by, in its description, "advancing Safe, Secure, Accurate, and Accessible Elections."

The Center for Election Innovation & Research has found that over the past 25 years, "states have implemented several innovative policies that streamline the process of voter registration, promote voter list accuracy, and create more options for eligible citizens to register or update their voter registration."

Among the changes: more online voter registration, same-day voter registration, and automatic voter registration. Forty-six states and Washington, D.C., use at least one of these methods, up from seven states in 2000.

Next steps

The commission's ability to effect change now appears stymied.

"Congress deliberately structured the Election Assistance Commission as a bipartisan agency to help states administer free, fair, and secure elections," said Michael Waldman, president and CEO of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law.

"These removals leave the agency without leadership and unable to carry out its major responsibilities," he said.

Trump is using the authority that the Supreme Court appeared to give him in a decision last week allowing him to remove members of independent agencies, except for Federal Reserve governors.

Trump would have to appoint two Democrats as well as two Republicans to the EAC, but they would need Senate confirmation.

Asked if the president planned appointments anytime soon, the White House official said, "The Administration from the start has been working across all agencies and local partners to safeguard elections from fraud and abuse, and investing in a strong infrastructure to sustain that mission especially in the midterm elections."

David Lightman has been a reporter or editor for more than 50 years. He's worked for the Hagerstown (Md.) Morning Herald, Riverside (Calif.) Press Enterprise, and then 10 years at the Baltimore Evening Sun, covering local news and, for six years, state government and the legislature. He spent 23 years as the Hartford Courant's Washington Bureau Chief, and 18 years at McClatchy's Washington bureau, where he covered the White House and Congress. He also served as regional editor, supervising the bureau's seven regional reporters. He was president of Washington's Gridiron Club in 2018 and won the David Lynch award for regional reporting in 2007.

Trump administration targets state AI laws over ideology

BY ROBBIE SEQUEIRA

The Trump administration is continuing its pushback against state artificial intelligence laws that it views as ideologically biased, proposing a new Federal Trade Commission policy.

The proposed policy statement, which is open for public comment through July 31, would affect how the FTC regulates AI companies. The agency said it's meant to address concerns that "AI companies that distort their systems' outputs to achieve undisclosed ideological objectives" could be deceiving consumers in violation of federal law.

"The FTC wants to hear from businesses and consumers about their experiences and concerns regarding the subversion of AI systems for ideological ends," Chairman Andrew N. Ferguson said in a statement.

The proposal specifically mentions a first-of-its-kind Colorado law that had banned "algorithmic discrimination," or AI output that might lead to decisions disfavoring people on jobs, loans or healthcare based on their race, religion, gender and other protected categories. But the Colorado legislature already has repealed that provision. The revamped law instead focuses on regulating technology that results in "consequential decisions" for consumers.

The controversial law prompted a lawsuit from xAI, Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company, which the U.S. Department of Justice supported.

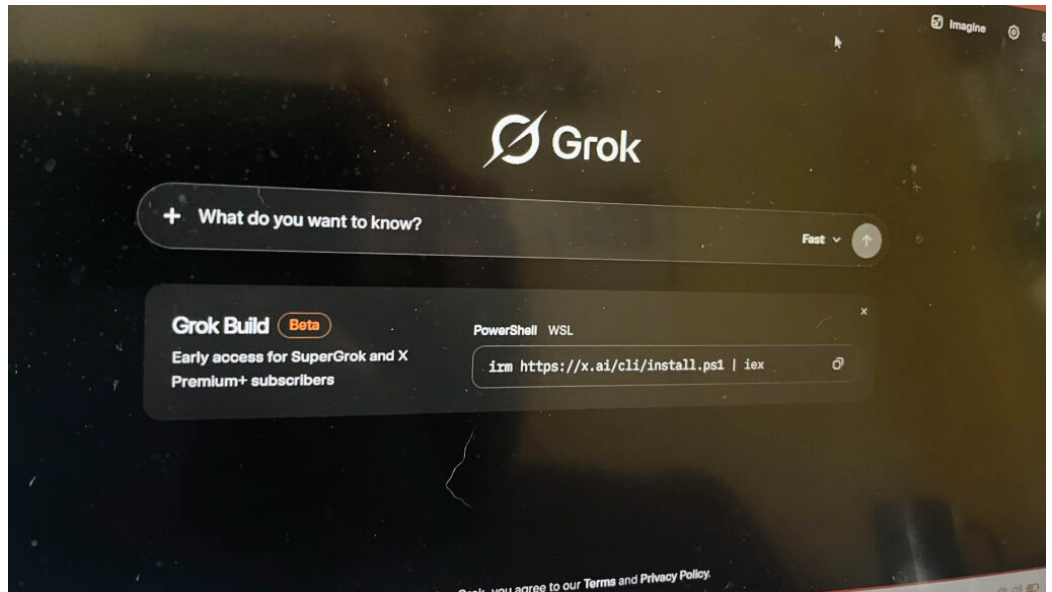
In December 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order targeting state AI laws, including creation of a Department of Justice AI Litigation Task Force to challenge state AI laws. His order also directed the FTC to issue a policy statement on regulation of state laws that "require alterations to the truthful outputs of AI models."

Stateline asked the FTC if there were any state and city laws that officials felt were currently in violation of federal laws, but received no response.

Tyler Thompson, a Denver-based lawyer with firm Reed Smith who tracks emerging technology law, said the FTC proposal is important because it raises the possibility that companies could face deceptive-practices claims based on how they tune, weight or steer AI models, which could also prompt state policy on the issue.

"Just the fact that companies could be tweaking their models and that could lead to a deceptive trade practice, I think is huge news," Thompson said.

Thompson believes the legal battle and the FTC's focus on restricting similar laws will lead to "a more niche" policy focus on AI – such as deepfakes, nonconsensual sexual content, children's safety, companion chatbots and data centers — areas where there is bipartisan agreement.



A laptop shows Grok, an artificial intelligence chatbot developed by Elon Musk's company xAI. The Trump administration is continuing its pushback against state AI laws that it views as ideologically biased. (Photo by Robbie Sequeira/Stateline)

Noah M. Kenney, founder and principal consultant of Digital 520, an AI governance, security and privacy consultancy, who also responded to the FTC's request for public comment, said the proposed statement carries more political pressure rather than being an enforceable federal regulation.

"The real effect of this statement is signaling and pressure, not legal preemption, especially paired with the December executive order's AI litigation task force."

Kenney said there is also an irony in the federal government's argument.

"A federal effort to dictate what counts as a 'neutral' or 'accurate' output raises its own First Amendment concerns about compelled speech," he said.

Stateline reporter Robbie Sequeira can be reached at rsequeira@stateline.org.

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

Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

15 states sue Trump administration to block school mental health funding cuts

BY ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS

Fifteen states on Friday sued the Trump administration to prevent millions of dollars in cuts to school-based mental health funding.

The new lawsuit is part of an ongoing legal battle between Democratic-led states and the U.S. Department of Education over a mental health grant program that Congress established following the 2018 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

At stake is a \$1 billion program that offers grants to school districts across the country to help them hire and train more mental health professionals to work in schools.

Democratic attorneys general in 15 states say the Trump administration, in defiance of a December 2025 court order, plans to unlawfully terminate the grants at the end of this month, resulting in millions in lost funding.

"Our children deal with a unique set of problems which arise from growing up in 2026 — from loneliness to substance use disorder to the ever-present fear of violence — and the programs funded through these grants are designed to help them cope and hopefully thrive," said Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Neronha, a Democrat, in a statement announcing the lawsuit.

In 2022, after a school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, claimed the lives of 19 students and two teachers,



Student backpacks seen on the first day of school last year at Harborview Elementary School in Juneau, Alaska. Fifteen Democratic-led states are suing the Trump administration over cuts to a \$1 billion school mental health grant program. (Photo by

Corinne Smith/Alaska Beacon)

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Congress allocated \$1 billion to the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program to increase the number of school-based mental health professionals.

That funding effort was bipartisan; at the time Republican U.S. senators including John Cornyn of Texas, Susan Collins of Maine and Thom Tillis of North Carolina publicly supported it. And within a year, the grants had funded mental and behavioral health services to nearly 775,000 students nationwide.

But in April 2025, under President Donald Trump, the U.S. Department of Education told grantees the funding would be halted because their programs conflicted with Trump administration priorities. At that time, the grants were supporting efforts in 49 states to prepare thousands of mental health professionals to work in K-12 schools.

Trump administration officials told the media that the grants were cut over what the administration saw as connections to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

A coalition of 17 Democratic state attorneys general sued last July, and a court ruled in their favor, ordering the Trump administration to stop the grant discontinuation. In the months since the order, the education department has threatened to withhold funding or terminate the grants altogether.

The Democratic attorneys general said they filed the new lawsuit to cover gaps in the previous court order that could allow the Trump administration to follow through on its desire to halt the funding.

"The courts have repeatedly ruled that the Trump Administration does not have the power to arbitrarily revoke grant funding that provides critical mental health services to our students," said Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, a Democrat, in a statement about joining the lawsuit.

"Still, the federal government continues its attempts to terminate funding."

Stateline reached out to the U.S. Department of Education for comment but did not receive a response before publication.

Attorneys general participating in the lawsuit are from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington and Wisconsin.

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Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

Gun homicides declined in 2024 as firearm suicides hit record high, data shows

BY AMANDA WATFORD

Firearm homicides in the United States fell sharply in 2024, but gun suicides reached a record high, according to a new analysis of federal mortality data by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions.

The report, based on newly released data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found that 44,447 people died from firearm-related injuries in 2024, down about 5% from the previous year. The decline was driven largely by a nearly 16% drop in firearm homicides, which fell to 15,364 deaths.

At the same time, firearm suicides rose to a record 27,593 deaths, accounting for about 62% of all firearm deaths in 2024.

The report's authors also found that firearms remained the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1 to 17 for the fifth consecutive year, with 2,214 deaths in 2024.

About 86% of firearm deaths were among men, according to the report. But rates have risen over the past decade among some groups of women, particularly Black women. From 2015 to 2024, the firearm homicide rate among Black women increased 63%, compared with a 2% increase among white women. Over the same period, the firearm suicide rate among Black women rose 169%, compared with a 4% increase among white women.

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The report also found increases among other groups of women. From 2015 to 2024, firearm homicide rates rose 39% among Asian or Pacific Islander women and 31% among Hispanic or Latina women, while firearm suicide rates increased 57% and 51%, respectively.

Overall, firearm deaths remain about 9% below their pandemic-era peak of 48,830 deaths in 2021 but are still higher than pre-pandemic levels, according to the report.

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Amanda Watford (née Hernández) is a national reporter covering criminal justice and public safety for Stateline. Her reporting focuses on how states are reshaping approaches to policing, crime victims' services, corrections, courts, drug policy, gun violence and more.



Firearms for sale are displayed at the Centennial Gun Club in Centennial, Colo., in June 2026. Nearly 45,000 people died from firearm-related injuries in 2024, down about 5% from the previous year, according to a new analysis of CDC mortality data. (Photo by Sara Wilson/Colorado Newswire)

Trump administration targeting states' DHS grants to force voting changes, House Dems say

BY JACOB FISCHLER

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's guidelines to states on how to request funding under counterterrorism grant programs include potentially illegal demands related to election administration, Democrats on the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee said Thursday.

The Department of Homeland Security, which includes FEMA, sent states last month notices of available federal funding for non-disaster grants under the Homeland Security Grant Program, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program and the Transit Security Grant Program.

Those notices included "blatant attempts to force communities to comply with the Trump administration's political demands" or risk losing \$200 million in federal funds, the letter said.

"As we approach the 25th anniversary of September 11th, it is deeply alarming that DHS and FEMA, under Donald Trump, continue to manipulate the very funding born out of a national tragedy," they wrote. "Playing political games with counterterrorism funding undermines public safety and deprives first responders of the resources they need to do their jobs."

The panel's 15 Democrats, led by ranking member Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, signed the letter to Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin and acting FEMA Administrator Robert Fenton.

Spokespeople for DHS, FEMA and the committee's Republicans did not immediately return messages seeking comment late Thursday. A White House spokesperson referred a request for comment to DHS.

SAVE computer system

The department is withholding up to 20% of the programs' congressionally appropriated grant funding unless states and cities update their election laws, the Democrats wrote. The administration wants states to use the department's powerful SAVE computer system to verify the citizenship of every voter, among other demands, the letter said.

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The department also continues to retain more than \$600 million in 2025 funding, the lawmakers said.

Some of the administration's demands are unworkable or illegal under federal court decisions or state law, they said.

For example, two days before the notice went to states, a federal judge ruled that states could not use the SAVE system to check voter eligibility.

"It is unclear how or why DHS and FEMA published (notice of funding opportunity) guidance that would deliberately conflict with a court ruling," they wrote. "To date, FEMA has not provided a revised (notice) that complies with court orders on the use of the SAVE system."

'Costly and impossible' for states

Several requirements, demanded barely five months before midterm elections in November and one month before grant applications are due, "are costly and impossible to achieve on the unrealistic timeline dictated by the administration," the letter said.

Other criteria were unclear, such as a requirement to "reconcile voters and ballots using a methodology the Secretary has not disclosed," the Democrats wrote. The department has also not said how post-election manual audits must be conducted.

The lawmakers asked the administration to revert to 2024 guidance, which would remove confusion about the grant programs' requirements and their legality, release materials that informed the department's decision to tie the grant funding to election security and to immediately release all holds "explicit or de facto" on last year's grants.

Constitutional mandate

The changes would "very likely harm" states' election integrity, David Becker, the executive director and founder of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research, said in a media briefing earlier Thursday.

Becker predicted that the order would be "very easy to block" in court.

The department's requirements are not authorized by Congress or the Constitution, which empowers states to administer elections, Becker said.

"This administration continues to either fail to understand or openly defy the constitutional mandate that gives authority to run elections to the states," he said.

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



Booths await voters during the May 19, 2026, primary election at Temple View Elementary School in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

(Photo by Pat Sutphin/Idaho Capital Sun)

Temporary party switchers receive encouragement and criticism ahead of Republican runoff election

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

The stakes are high enough in the race for the South Dakota Republican Party's nomination for governor that Nancy Turbak Berry became a Republican, at least temporarily.

The former Democratic state lawmaker intends to rejoin her preferred party after the July 28 runoff election.

"I wish we would elect Democrats," said Turbak Berry. "But until the state changes enough so that's a likely scenario, I think it's important to have a voice in the primary."

Turbak Berry voted for Gov. Larry Rhoden in the June 2 primary and intends to vote for him again in the runoff. Rhoden faces businessman Toby Doeden, and the winner will advance to the Nov. 3 general election to face Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers.

Turbak Berry is not alone.

In South Dakota, only registered Republicans can vote in Republican primary elections, while Democratic primaries are open to registered Democrats, independents and people who register without any affiliation. Democrats did not have any statewide primary races this year.

Voters don't need to explain their choice to switch parties, and parties gain voters ahead of elections for a host of reasons. But registration statistics suggest that a desire to participate in Republican primaries could drive more voters to the party during election years.

In the three months before the June 2 primary election, the total number of Democratic, independent, minor-party or non-politically affiliated voters in the state declined by 1,253.

The Republican Party added 4,452 voters during the same period.

The number of non-Republican voters has dropped before the primary in four of the last decade's six election years — every year without a Democratic presidential primary — with the most significant drop appearing this year. That is a pre-primary phenomenon. The ranks of registered Republicans and non-Republicans both grow in the months leading up to general elections and in non-election years.

In 2026, the pre-primary effect continued through the month of June and early July as voters anticipated casting ballots in the July 28 Republican governor runoff. Between the June 2 primary and July 9, the number of non-Republican voters dropped by 2,919 — more than double the decline in the three months leading up to the primary.

The Republican Party added 5,717 voters in those 37 days.



Voters fill out their ballots at a Sioux Falls polling place during the South Dakota primary election on June 2, 2026. (Photo by Makenzie

Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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The registration changes could be attributable to everyday life events, such as coming of age to vote, deaths or relocations from and to other states. But at least some of the shift involves temporary party switchers like Turbak Berry.

Lincoln County Auditor Sheri Lund said auditors often see voters switch their party affiliation ahead of primaries in South Dakota.

"You'll see them switch back after the primary," Lund said. "When they realize they can't vote for something unless they're a registered Republican, they might do that."

GOP leader: 'Decide who you are'

Former Sioux Falls Mayor Rick Knobe co-authored an opinion piece for The Dakota Scout newspaper shortly after the June 2 primary, encouraging people to temporarily change their voter registration to vote in the runoff. Knobe said he switched from an independent to Republican to vote for Rhoden ahead of the primary.

It was the first time he's temporarily switched, he said, because he felt compelled to vote for what he described as the "least offensive" candidate in the Republican race. He expects he'll vote for Democrat Dan Ahlers in the November election.

Knobe plans to eventually return his registration to independent.

South Dakota Republican Party Chairman Jim Eschenbaum said those who temporarily register as Republicans play "political games" that hurt the Republican Party because it tampers with which candidates will run in November. Eschenbaum himself switched permanently from a Democrat to Republican over a decade ago.

"These people have to decide who they are," Eschenbaum said. "If you're a Democrat, vote for the Democrats. Work on your own party. Don't try to sabotage our party. That's what they're doing."

Eschenbaum said he would support legislation that would restrict South Dakotans' ability to switch party affiliation, such as only allowing one switch a year.

But Knobe said outrage at South Dakotans switching parties is more partisan than civic.

"On a broader scale, they're trying to limit people's participation in the government we all pay for, and I find that un-American," Knobe said.

Open primary advocate: Shifts are inevitable in closed system

Joe Kirby, a lifelong Republican in Sioux Falls, said non-Republican voters feeling motivated to "game the system on occasion" to participate in elections is a result of South Dakota's closed primary system. Kirby has led unsuccessful efforts to restructure South Dakota's primary system into an open primary.

Of South Dakota's registered voters, about 52% are Republican and 47% are something else: Democratic, independent, a minor party, or not politically affiliated.

"All voters want to have a say in who is going to lead the state or represent them in Congress or in the Legislature. Right now, we have a system that doesn't give all groups an equal say," Kirby said. "It's a warped system that doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but it's in place and tough to change."

Kirby said he believes the increased interest and discussion around temporarily switching party status is partly due to his and others' efforts to open primaries in 2024 through a citizen-initiated ballot question.

"I think the voters are more aware now of the possibility of open primaries and the negative aspects of our closed primary system," Kirby said.

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

Iowa had twice the drinking water violations for nitrate in 2025 as in 2024

BY CAMI KOONS

A report from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources shows Iowa had 36 nitrate-related drinking water violations in 2025, which is more than double the number reported in 2024.

Each year, DNR submits a compliance report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency detailing violations of federal drinking water standards, from excessive contamination levels to operator certification requirements.

According to the 2025 report, nitrate contaminant levels above the EPA limit was the most common health-based standard violated by public water supply systems. The 36 violations occurred at 13 systems and impacted a total of 2,479 customers, according to the report. Violations of nitrate accounted for 41% of the total 87 violations of health-based standards.

A health-based standard assesses whether the public water supply system produced finished water within the EPA established limits for drinking water contaminants.

The 2024 report showed 14 violations for nitrate contaminant levels at nine public water supply systems, affecting 1,765 customers. This was also the most common violation in 2024 and accounted for nearly 19% of the 74 total violations.

In 2023, Iowa had 38 nitrate contaminant violations at seven public water supply systems. A graph of nitrate violations from 2016 through 2025 from DNR shows 2023 and 2025 had significantly more nitrate violations than the other years.

Slightly more than 90% of Iowa systems pull from groundwater sources. Surface water sources, like a river, and influenced groundwater sources, like a shallow well near a river, account for the other 10% of systems, though these systems serve about 47% of the state population.

Iowa rivers typically have elevated nitrate levels in the spring and summer months as heavy rains flush nutrients off the land and into the rivers. The DNR report said nitrate and nitrite can enter source water from the natural decay of organic matter, commercial fertilizers, contamination from human waste and farm animal waste.

Nitrate concentrations in major rivers like the Des Moines and Raccoon reached near-record high levels during summer 2025, leading to the first-ever lawn watering ban in the Des Moines metropolitan area. Levels remained elevated through the winter, causing Central Iowa Water Works to run its nitrate removal facility for a period in January and issue another lawn watering ban for a short period this summer. These measures were successful in preventing nitrate-related violations at Central Iowa Water Works systems.

The consumption of water with nitrate concentrations above the EPA limit of 10 milligrams per liter can



The Iowa Department of Natural Resources submits an annual report on safe drinking water violations in the state.

(Photo by Cami Koons / Iowa Capital Dispatch)

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be fatal for infants under 6 months of age as the contaminant affects the oxygen-carrying capacity of an infant's blood and can lead to an illness known as methemoglobinemia, or blue-baby syndrome.

Some research also points to adverse health effects with the consumption of nitrate in levels below the EPA maximum and some Iowans believe the nitrate concentrations in the state have contributed to the state's high cancer rates.

Nitrate concentrations in finished drinking water above the EPA standard are considered an acute violation, meaning it poses an "immediate" health risk, according to the DNR report. A violation occurs when a system records levels above the maximum in a monthly, quarterly or annual compliance period. Compliance is achieved when the system records two consecutive quarters in which the samples are all within the specified limits.

According to the report, more than half of the nitrate violations in 2025 occurred at four public water supply systems. The report said several of the systems with nitrate violations are installing treatment systems or connecting to other systems to address the nitrate violation issue.

The Little Brown Church in Chickasaw County had nine nitrate violations in 2025, Lazy T Campground in Delaware County had four nitrate violations and Lost Beach Resort, also in Delaware County, had four nitrate violations. Early Municipal Water Supply in Sac County, classified as a community water system, had four nitrate violations for the year.

Aside from Early Municipal Water Supply, the systems with the greatest number of violations were classified as transient non-community water systems, a type of public water supply system that serves more than 25 individuals daily, at least 60 days out of the year.

The report also shows "major" reporting and monitoring violations made by public water supply systems. A violation occurs when a system fails to collect, report, analyze or follow the proper sampling guidelines for a given contaminant in any one compliance period, which varies depending on the contaminant.

Approximately 20% of Iowa's public water supply systems had major reporting and monitoring violations, according to the report. Failure to collect coliform bacteria samples accounted for the majority of reporting and monitoring violations. Iowa had 249 violations for coliform bacteria monitoring at 158 systems.

Nitrate monitoring, with a total of 84 reporting violations across 66 systems, was one of the contaminants with the highest reporting violations in 2025.

Reporting and monitoring violations can most often be remedied by performing the necessary monitoring or issuing the necessary public notification. An administrative order can be issued for systems that fail to come into compliance in a timely manner.

Over 3.12 million Iowans — about 95% of the population — are served by public water supply systems, the remaining population is served by private water supplies, like a well on the property.

This article was updated to clarify that Central Iowa Water Works did not have nitrate violations in 2025.

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

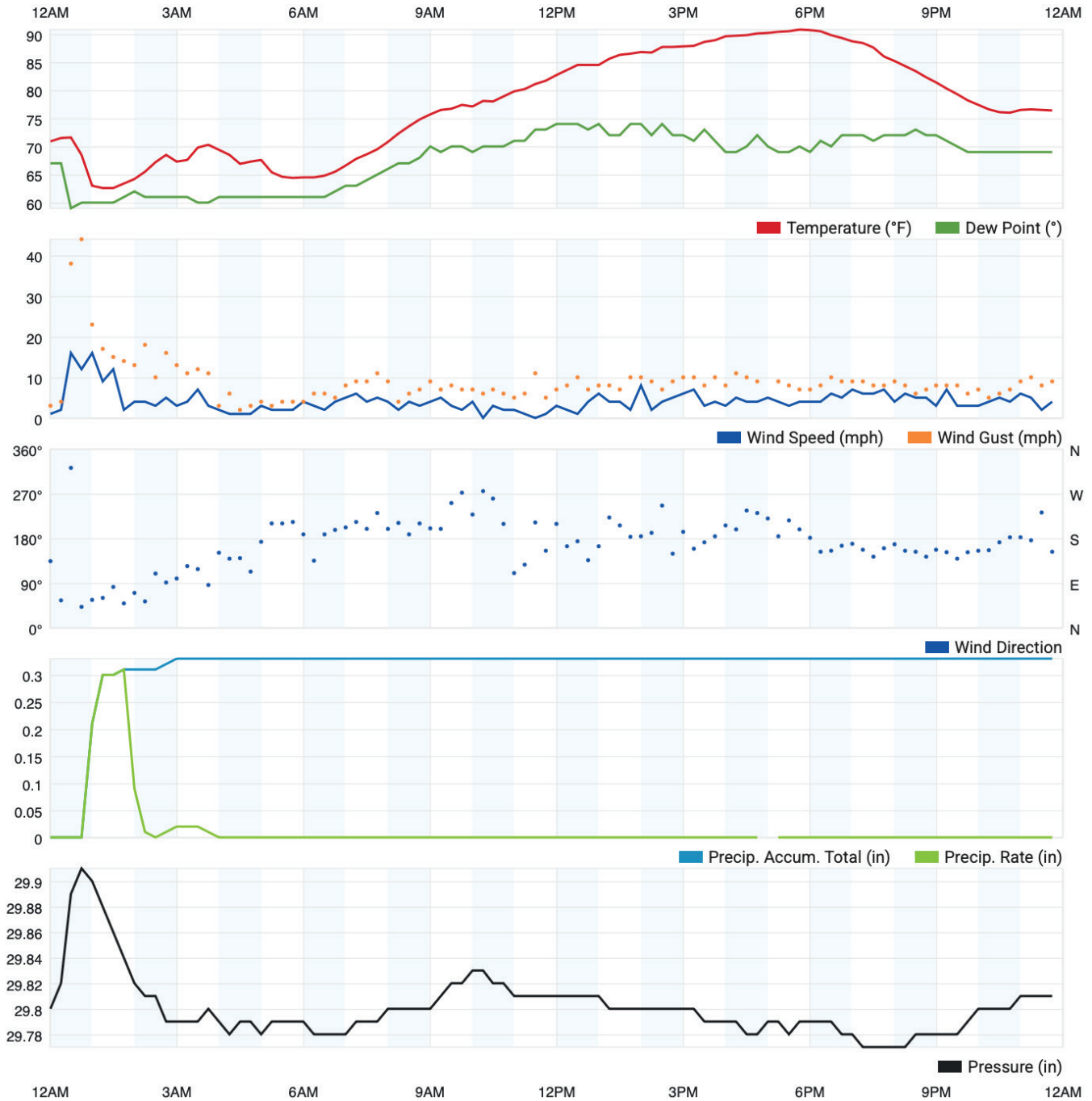
Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 10, 2026



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Heat Advisory

Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 96 °F

Low: 70 °F

High: 98 °F

Low: 73 °F

High: 100 °F

Hot

Clear

Hot

Clear

Hot and
Breezy



Long Duration Heatwave

Peak Heat Expected Sunday - Monday - Tuesday

July 11, 2026

2:58 AM

Key Messages

- Temperatures and humidity trending up through the weekend and persisting into next week.
 - ◆ **Hottest days will be Sunday through Tuesday!**
- Dewpoints in the 60s & low 70s.
Heat Index Values from 90s to low 100s.
- The **LONG DURATION** heat may cause widespread heat related impacts particularly for those without adequate cooling and/or those sensitive to heat!



Maximum Temperature (°F) Forecast

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

Maximum Heat Index (°F) Forecast

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

A heat dome will be overhead this weekend and continuing through at least early next week. High temperatures and heat indices will be in the 90s to the lower 100s. The LONG DURATION heat may cause widespread heat related impacts particularly for those without adequate cooling and/or those sensitive to heat!

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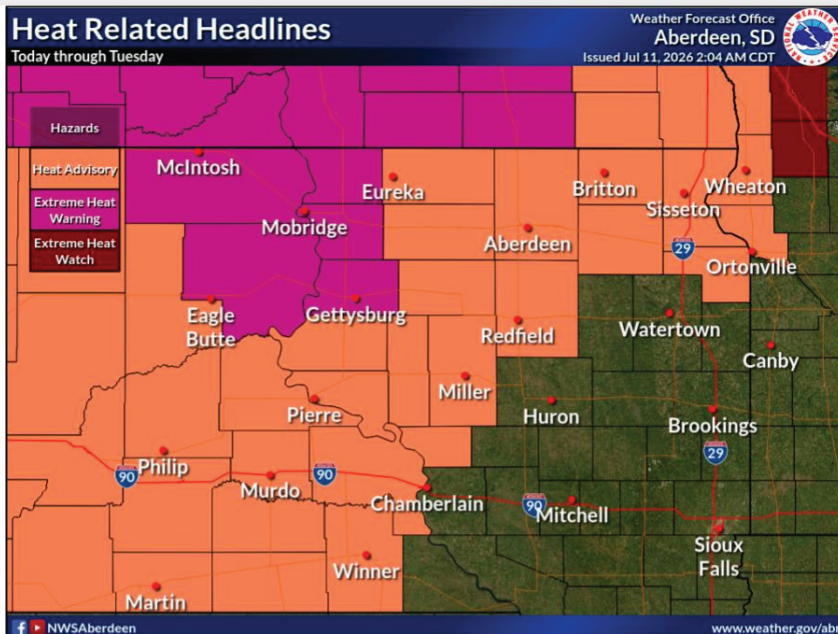
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Long Duration Heatwave Headlines

July 11, 2026
3:01 AM

- **Extreme Heat Warning**- North central South Dakota.
- **Heat Advisory**- Central and portions of northeastern SD through west central MN.
- **Valid: noon today through Tuesday evening CDT.**
- Uncertainty exists regarding how extreme the heat and humidity will get, therefore, changes in timing and intensity of heat are still possible.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Extreme Heat Warning is in effect for portions of north central South Dakota. A Heat Advisory is in effect for central and portions of northeastern SD through west central MN. Valid noon today through Tuesday evening CDT.



Maximum HeatRisk

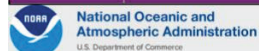
July 11, 2026
3:04 AM CDT

Key Messages

- Maximum HeatRisk is expected to be **High to Extreme**.
- This heat affects anyone without cooling/hydration and those sensitive to heat.
- Don't forget about your pets! Make sure to provide them with lots of water and shade. Bring them inside if possible. Never leave pets in a hot vehicle!

Orange 2	Moderate - Affects those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without cooling/hydration, and some health systems and industries.
Red 3	Major - Affects anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems and industries.
Magenta 4	Extreme - Rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with no overnight relief affecting anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems, industries, and infrastructure.

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



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 91 °F at 6:07 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 1:08 AM

Wind: 44 mph at 12:42 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 110 in 1930

Record Low: 45 in 1941

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.26

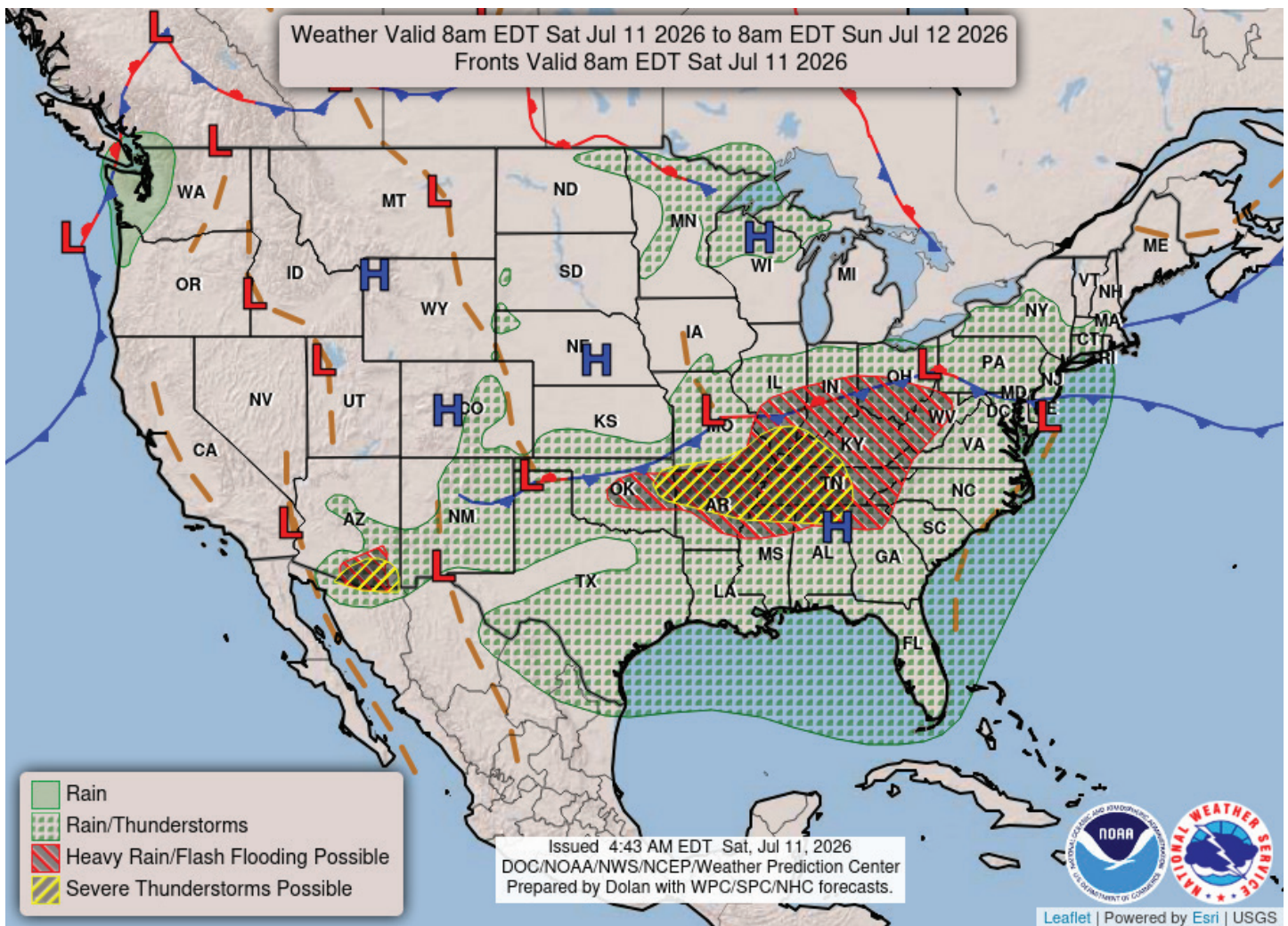
Precip to date in July.: 4.72

Average Precip to date: 12.27

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 11, 1909: A deadly, estimated F2 tornado moved ESE across the Simpson Park section of Big Stone City in South Dakota. A bus was thrown from the road, and the driver was killed. Two homes and several barns were destroyed. As the tornado crossed the foot of Big Stone Lake, it tore apart a railroad yard and killed four of the 26 Armenian laborers who were living in box cars at Ortonville, Minnesota. Nineteen were injured.

July 11, 1981: Severe thunderstorms moved eastward across the entire length of the South Dakota along the northern portion of the state. Hail, with the largest up to nine inches in circumference, resulted in 100 percent crop loss, damage to numerous buildings and loss of livestock. Trees were stripped, and large limbs were broken. High winds also accompanied these storms. Storms lasted into the early morning hours on the 12. Thunderhawk in Corson County had estimated winds of 70 to 75 mph that destroyed a machine shop and seven metal grain storage bins. In and around Pollock, a silo was moved three feet off the foundation. Power and telephones lines were down. Rainfall measured 2.28 inches in two hours in Pollock.

1888 — Heavy snow reached almost to the base of Mt. Washington, NH, and the peaks of the Green Mountains were whitened. (David Ludlum)

1936: From July 5-17, temperatures exceeding 111 degrees in Manitoba and Ontario claimed 1,180 lives (mostly the elderly and infants) during the most prolonged, deadliest heat wave on record. Four hundred of these deaths were caused by people who drowned seeking refuge from the heat. In fact, the heat was so intense that steel rail lines and bridge girders twisted, sidewalks buckled, crops wilted and fruit baked on trees. Some record temperatures include; 112 degrees at St. Albans and Emerson, Manitoba, 111 at Brandon, Manitoba, 108 at Atikokan, Ontario, and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

1987 — Early morning thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Parkston, SD, and wind gusts to 87 mph at Buffalo, MN. Later in the day strong thunderstorm winds at Howard WI collapsed a circus tent injuring 44 persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southern Texas, with totals ranging up to 13 inches near Medina. Two men drowned when their pick-up truck was swept into the Guadalupe River, west of the town of Hunt. Ten cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Baltimore, MD, reported a record high reading of 102 degrees for the second day in a row. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from North Dakota to Indiana. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced tennis ball size hail at Carson. Thunderstorms in Indiana produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Fort Wayne. Five cities in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lakeland, FL, with a reading of 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990: The costliest hailstorm in U.S. history occurred along the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. (Denver, Colorado): Softball-sized hail destroyed roofs and cars, causing more than \$600 million in total damage.

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Daily Devotion

What We Know in Times of Suffering

Scripture anchors us in truth when everything else feels uncertain.

Lamentations 3:22-23: 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

The Lord reveals some things to us and leaves others shrouded in mystery. So we may not know why specific disasters occur, but there are biblical truths that assure us the Lord can be trusted even in times of great suffering. Because of Scripture, we can be certain that ...

God is sovereign (Psalm 103:19). Nothing in heaven or on earth is outside His awareness and ultimate authority. Even when we don't understand His ways, we can trust His character.

The Lord loves people and desires their salvation. Giving His Son for the salvation of the world proves beyond a doubt that He loves each person. His love remains constant, even when we can't feel it or struggle to accept it.

God can bring redemption from tragedy. Though we can't fully comprehend what He's doing in each situation, He promises to work all things—even disasters—for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Suffering often awakens people to their need for God and stirs believers to deeper faith and compassion.

The One who loves us perfectly is present with us, working according to His purposes whether circumstances are dark or bright. Knowing this should fill us with hope, even in the midst of crisis. He is faithful, and His promises are true.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.10.26

14 42 46 47 57 5

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 40 Mins 57
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.10.26

2 39 44 46 56 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$637,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 57
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.26

7 11 18 31 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$177,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 57
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.26

6 27 33 44 69 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 57
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: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 56
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Multiple New York Times reporters issued subpoenas over Air Force One reporting

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration issued subpoenas on Friday to several New York Times journalists after its report this week on security concerns involving the new Air Force One, according to the paper.

The new jet, which President Donald Trump received as a gift from Qatar, just entered service last week.

The subpoenas seek to force the reporters to testify before a federal grand jury in Manhattan on Wednesday, the paper said, adding that federal agents delivered some subpoenas to the reporters at their homes.

The NYT report could not be independently confirmed and there was no immediate response from the White House or the Department of Justice.

"The appearance of federal law enforcement agents on the doorstep of news reporters should shock the conscience of any American who believes in the Constitution and the press freedom it protects," said the paper's lawyer David McCraw in a Friday statement.

The developments come after Trump flew the new Air Force One to a NATO summit in Turkey. But he departed Wednesday on one of the older-model Air Force One jets for a trip to Mildenhall, a Royal Air Force base in Suffolk, England. The two jets both flew to Mildenhall. Trump then switched to the newer plane for the flight home to Joint Base Andrews.

The abrupt plane swap came as a shaky cease-fire with Iran had collapsed, with the U.S. launching airstrikes on Iran and Tehran attacking three Gulf Arab states. Iran and Turkey share a border, sparking speculation that the Qatari-gifted jet — which underwent a \$400 million retrofit — lacked certain sophisticated security and countermeasure systems.

The paper reported Wednesday the switch had come at the urging of the Secret Service. On Thursday, the paper said the newer plane lacked some of the advanced security features of the older aircraft, including antimissile capabilities. Both articles cited anonymous sources.

Trump, at the time, denied any security concerns, posting on social media that the stop in Mildenhall was so that service members there could view the new jet. During the flight, Trump denied to the reporters accompanying him that security concerns involving Iran were a factor in flying two planes home. Asked if he was aware of any credible threats against Air Force One by Iran, Trump brushed off the question.

"I have a threat all the time. I'm No. 1 on their list," he said

The White House later denied any security shortcomings on the new plane.

"The new Air Force One is a state-of-the-art aircraft that has been fitted with high-level security protocols that ensure the safety of the President and his staff," spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement. "As the President has said recently, there are many enemies of America who have their sights on him, and we use every tool at our disposal — including distraction and misdirection — to address those threats."

The Times journalists who received subpoenas included Julian E. Barnes, Eric Lipton, Tyler Pager and Eric Schmitt, the paper reported.

Earlier this year, the Justice Department issued subpoenas seeking to compel testimony from reporters at The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal. In both cases, the DOJ later withdrew the subpoenas.

Trump threatens Iran after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's funeral saw open calls for his killing

By JON GAMBRELL, MICHELLE L. PRICE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump threatened Iran on Saturday after the funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saw open calls for his killing, further underlining the tensions gripping the Middle East as an interim deal to end the war buckles under repeated crossfire in the region.

Trump made the comments on his Truth Social after senior U.S. officials demanded that Iran make a public statement saying the Strait of Hormuz is open and that ships crossing the vital corridor won't be attacked any longer.

So far, Tehran has not done so, instead insisting that the route remain under its control and that it be allowed to charge ships moving through it, upending decades of precedent that consider the strait an international waterway.

There had been multiple days of U.S. airstrikes targeting Iran, as well as Iranian retaliatory fire targeting nations across the Middle East. Those strikes had been sparked by Iran attacking three ships in the strait earlier this week.

Trump makes an online threat toward Iran

A thousand "missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands of more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat," Trump wrote on his website.

The U.S. president said his threat was in response to threats "to assassinate, or attempt to assassinate" him. During Khamenei's funeral, mourners repeatedly held posters or banners calling for him to be killed along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Iran war's opening moments on Feb. 28 saw an airstrike that killed Khamenei, 86. Iran only buried Khamenei this week following a dayslong funeral ceremony that saw his body taken to cities in both Iran and Iraq.

Trump added in his post that the U.S. military would "completely decimate and destroy all areas of Iran — PRAISE BE TO ALLAH!"

Trump, repeatedly during the war and its uneasy ceasefire, has invoked the name of God in Arabic, as well as threatened to destroy Iran's very civilization. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a nationwide advocacy group, has in the past criticized Trump's "deranged mocking of Islam."

Trump's comments come as the Strait of Hormuz is a major point of contention

The U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe to reporters the state of play with Iran, said the resumption of strikes this week came after what they described as a rogue faction of Iranian hard-liners trying to sabotage the ceasefire between Tehran and Washington.

However, Iran has insisted its theocracy is unified after the war under the country's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei.

The U.S. officials said Friday that Trump is giving U.S. negotiators limited time to reach a deal with Iran, but, in a sign of the challenges ahead, they underscored that the president had a wide range of options if talks fall apart.

Moments before the U.S. officials spoke, however, Tehran's diplomat at the United Nations told reporters that any activity in the Strait of Hormuz, including its opening or demining operations, "rests exclusively with Iran."

Qatari mediators separately traveled to Iran to meet with officials on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said.

Iran has said the strait must now be under its sole control and that vessels should begin paying fees to Tehran — even though the world has for decades considered it an international waterway. About a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed through the strait before the war began.

Iran's grip on the strait during the conflict led to a global energy crisis, though oil prices have sharply dropped since wartime highs of \$120 a barrel.

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Middle East remains tense after attacks

After the U.S. wrapped up its latest strikes on Thursday, more attacks reportedly hit Iran, leaving questions about who else may be targeting the Islamic Republic. Israel didn't claim them, meaning the Gulf Arab states may have launched them, likely as a means to deter Iran from attacking them again. Iran on Thursday retaliated for U.S. strikes by targeting Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar.

The strikes in Iran over two days killed at least 17 people and wounded 115 others, Iran's Health Ministry spokesperson Hossein Kermanpour said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi traveled to Oman on Saturday to meet with his counterpart. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told his country's state broadcaster TRT that he believed "a solution can be reached" this weekend between Iran and Oman, which lie on opposite sides of the narrow waterway.

However, Araghchi on Saturday accused the U.S. of violating the interim deal by ending waivers allowing Iran to sell crude oil on the open market in U.S. dollars. Washington did that in response to the attacks on ships in the strait.

"Reality check: There can only be mutual compliance," Araghchi wrote on X.

The U.S. continues to urge mariners to travel on a southern route through Oman's territorial waters to avoid Iranian waters and the commands of its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. That has angered Tehran and sparked the attacks in the strait.

US insists a nuclear deal will require Iran to turn over enriched uranium

The U.S. officials also told journalists that any deal on Iran's nuclear program would require Tehran to turn over its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. That's something Iran has repeatedly refused.

If the U.S. does not reach a deal with Iran to turn over its nuclear material, it has military options to ensure that it remains buried underground forever, the officials said. They did not detail those options.

The uranium, enriched to near weapons-grade levels, is believed to be at nuclear sites the U.S. bombed in 2025. Iran long has insisted its nuclear program is peaceful, despite the International Atomic Energy Agency saying the Islamic Republic is the only country in the world to enrich uranium so highly without a weapons program.

The officials also insisted that they would never reach a nuclear deal with Iran if it did not first stop its attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

Platner formally withdraws from Maine Senate race and Democrats announce process to name new nominee

By MEG KINNARD and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Graham Platner on Friday submitted his paperwork to formally withdraw from Maine's U.S. Senate race, officially ending an upstart yet troubled campaign whose dissolution threatens Democrats' pursuit of chamber control.

The Maine Democratic Party announced later Friday that it will hold a nominating convention on July 25 to choose Platner's replacement for the November ballot.

Platner's paperwork was received by the Maine secretary of state's office Friday afternoon.

In a letter to the secretary of state's office, which Platner also posted on social media, he wrote that the Mainers who had nominated him "voted for a new kind of politics" that is "representative of people down here in the real world — not billionaires, oligarchs, or the political establishment." It was the same outsider chord that had been a trademark of his tumultuous campaign, in which Platner drew backing from progressive leaders including Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna of California.

"I seek to further the movement we have built together and the future we believe in," he went on, without detailing what that meant.

Maine is considered a key state for control of the narrowly divided Senate, and Democrats were desperate for a candidate capable of defeating Republican Sen. Susan Collins.

The formal withdrawal comes two days after Platner said he would quit the race, facing an allegation of sexual assault that he has denied. Maine Democrats are seeking a new nominee, and several hopefuls

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have already begun jockeying for position.

Maine Democratic Party Chairman Charlie Dingman said delegates representing all of Maine's 16 counties will choose someone "who has the energy, ideas and popular support" to defeat Collins. The party said 601 delegates will participate.

"Our message to Mainers is this: While these circumstances are unprecedented and the challenge is enormous, your state party is ready and capable of rising to this challenge," Dingman said.

State law includes a provision for Democrats to replace Platner before the general election but the replacement must be named by July 27.

Several Democrats have announced runs for the Senate nomination this week. They include three candidates who lost the June primary for the governor nomination — former Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention director Nirav Shah, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows and former Maine Senate President Troy Jackson.

Others who have announced runs include Maine Beer Company co-founder Dan Kleban; former 2nd Congressional District candidates Jordan Wood and Paige Loud; and former Maine Senate candidates David Costello and Andrea LaFlamme. State Rep. Valli Geiger has also expressed interest in the post but has not formally announced.

Crews are draining the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool again as part of Trump's troubled revamp

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Crews are again draining the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool as President Donald Trump's problem-plagued effort to revamp the waterway pushes well past his initial goal of having it ready by July 4 to mark the nation's 250th birthday.

The president at first suggested his renovations would last a century. But, within weeks of the project originally reaching completion last month, the water was beset by an algae bloom and pieces of the new coating appeared to be peeling off the bottom.

Trump has blamed the peeling on vandals, though critics allege it's from shoddy repair work.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, whose agency oversees the National Park Service, told conservative podcaster Katie Miller in an interview released earlier this week that the new round of draining was planned. He also said that the water might still contain debris from an extensive Independence Day fireworks display over the National Mall.

"Drain the water, clean up the fireworks stuff," Burgum told Miller, who is the wife of deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller. "Repair the vandalism that was done. Fill it back up again."

The work on the Reflecting Pool is just one of a number of projects Trump has spearheaded across the nation's capital. Most prominently, he demolished the White House's East Wing to build a \$400 million ballroom and plans to build a towering arch between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery.

He initially announced his intentions to beautify the Reflecting Pool this spring, saying he wanted it completed before the nation's 250th birthday celebrations.

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On Thursday, former Olympic canoe racer David Hearn pleaded not guilty in D.C. Superior Court to deliberately damaging the Reflecting Pool. 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.

His attorneys and other Trump administration critics have derided the case as an abuse of prosecutorial power and maintain he is being scapegoated for the poor job done fixing up the Reflecting Pool.

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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.

The pool was closed for the Independence Day celebration, which featured what Trump said was the largest fireworks display in the world. The president had said that the pool would have to be drained anew as part of the new round of repairs.

Burgum has also said that the Trump administration won't seek bids for the new rounds of repairs. He told CNN's "State of the Union" last weekend: "We'll use the same company because they did a fantastic job."

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

Democratic senators and House members are investigating the pool project, including seeking answers about how much taxpayer funding is involved.

Crews are draining the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool again as part of Trump's troubled revamp

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Crews are again draining the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool as President Donald Trump's problem-plagued effort to revamp the waterway pushes well past his initial goal of having it ready by July 4 to mark the nation's 250th birthday.

The president at first suggested his renovations would last a century. But, within weeks of the project originally reaching completion last month, the water was beset by an algae bloom and pieces of the new coating appeared to be peeling off the bottom.

Trump has blamed the peeling on vandals, though critics allege it's from shoddy repair work.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, whose agency oversees the National Park Service, told conservative podcaster Katie Miller in an interview released earlier this week that the new round of draining was planned. He also said that the water might still contain debris from an extensive Independence Day fireworks display over the National Mall.

"Drain the water, clean up the fireworks stuff," Burgum told Miller, who is the wife of deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller. "Repair the vandalism that was done. Fill it back up again."

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Police in the UK arrest a suspect in the killing of former Parliament member Ann Widdecombe

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police on Friday arrested a 26-year-old man on suspicion of murder in the killing of Ann Widdecombe, a former British member of Parliament and reality TV contestant.

Widdecombe, 78, was found dead on Thursday in her Haytor Vale home on the edge of Dartmoor National Park in southwest England after sustaining what police said were "serious injuries."

The killing was not believed to be an act of terror and there was no information to suggest it was politically motivated, Devon and Cornwall Police Assistant Chief Constable Matt Longman said.

Longman did not discuss a possible motive but said the suspect was in custody as the investigation continues.

"This is really shocking news, and my thoughts, I think all of our thoughts, will be with the family and friends of Ann Widdecombe at this awful time," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. "Ann was a distinguished politician over many, many years with many achievements, and it's a huge, huge loss."

Widdecombe found fame after leaving Parliament as a contestant on the Strictly Come Dancing and Celebrity Big Brother reality television shows. She later joined the Brexit Party and became a spokeswoman for the anti-immigration Reform UK party.

She served in the House of Commons as an MP from 1987 to 2010 and was known for socially conservative views opposing abortion rights and expansion of LGBTQ rights.

Starmer said the security of lawmakers was "of the utmost importance" as he urged people to rise above political differences.

Security has been tightened for politicians after the murders of two serving members of Parliament in the past decade. Labour lawmaker Jo Cox was shot and stabbed in 2016 by a far-right extremist, and Conservative David Amess was stabbed in 2021 by an attacker inspired by the Islamic State group.

Nigel Farage, leader of Reform, said he was deeply upset over Widdecombe's death and noted that "things have become even more dangerous" for people in public life.

Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson called Widdecombe a "heroic Brexiteer and a great speaker who could move Tory audiences to such ecstasy that she was a very hard act to follow."

The management company that represented her after she left politics said her life and career were driven by strong Christian values and a commitment to public service.

"She loved the cut and thrust of political debate and, 16 years after leaving Parliament, was still actively campaigning for Reform UK and offering forthright views on the hot topics of the day," Cloud9 Management said.

"As Ann once said... 'we get one go this side of eternity, one go. Life is not a dress rehearsal, you take opportunities that you like and you go for it, that's my philosophy.'"

Charles hosted Prince Harry and family for first time in years as they try to repair a family rift

By DANICA KIRKA and BRIAN MELLELY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III hosted Prince Harry and met with his family for the first time in years Friday as they try to repair a rift that has persisted since his youngest son and wife quit royal life and moved to America six years ago.

Harry, Meghan and their two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet, met with the king and Queen Camilla at Highgrove House, a country estate west of London, Buckingham Palace confirmed.

The Duke of Sussex had arrived Monday in his homeland for a number of charity events that were overshadowed by speculation of whether he would meet with his father.

British tabloids and news broadcasts were filled with speculation about whether Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, would accompany him and, more importantly, whether they would bring their two children so they can finally get to know Grandpa Charles.

However, the monarch's schedule is often years in the making, with events penciled in long before they take place. An opportunity to hold such a meeting would have been fleeting, particularly because the children would need to return to school in the fall and because they live in California.

The wish to seize the moment fueled tensions between Harry and royal officials earlier this week. That was highlighted by embarrassing scenes when royal officials first invited Harry to stay at Buckingham Palace, then rescinded the offer after the prince didn't accept it in a timely manner.

Harry's visit also coincided with him losing his final lawsuit in his quest to tame the British tabloids. A judge ruled that he failed to prove his privacy invasion claims against the publisher of the Daily Mail.

His legal battles have been a source of friction with his family, however. Harry has said he wants to reconcile with his 77-year-old father, who is being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer.

Harry and Charles met briefly for a cup of tea in September during a short visit in London, the first time they'd seen each other in well over a year.

But the prince has also wanted his children to see the monarch, whom they first met during celebrations for the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

The royal children, Archie, 7, and Lilibet, 5, are now old enough to remember meeting their grandfather, and will certainly hope for pictures with the king, though the event was deemed private and no images will be publicly released.

Tensions within the House of Windsor have heightened ever since Harry and Meghan gave up their royal duties and moved to California to pursue lucrative media deals, free from the pressures of royal life in London.

They reached a new low after Harry published an explosive memoir that included unflattering depictions of the royal family and damning allegations of a toxic relationship between the monarchy and the press.

Harry's description of royals leaking information about other family members in exchange for positive coverage of themselves is just one of the tawdry allegations in his book, "Spare." The prince was especially scathing about Camilla, accusing her of feeding private conversations to the media as she sought to rehabilitate her image after her longtime affair with Charles when he was heir to the throne.

After losing a court battle over his security issue last year, Harry said he hoped to rebuild relations with his family, even as he suggested that the royals had sought to prevent him from receiving police protection to punish him for walking away from royal duties.

"I would love reconciliation with my family. There's no point in continuing to fight anymore," Harry told the BBC. "I don't know how much longer my father has."

The visit Friday is a step toward mending those fences.

Mikel Merino stars again as Spain edges Belgium 2-1 in the World Cup quarterfinals

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Mikel Merino is Spain's World Cup hero once again, and even he finds it hard to believe.

A mere four days after Merino scored a clutch goal as a substitute in injury time to beat Portugal, he found himself in the right spot again in the quarterfinals when Belgium's backup goalkeeper spilled the ball into his path.

Merino booted it home in the 88th minute, sending Spain to a 2-1 victory Friday and into a titanic semi-final showdown with tournament favorite France.

"I've done this again, and it's happened to me again, so it would seem that coincidence exists," a smiling Merino said. "If you're ready and you try, I guess it can happen for you."

Already a versatile contributor in any role he can get as a depth player for his country or English club Arsenal, the multi-positional Merino has transformed into the ultimate super-sub while providing exactly what Spain needed to survive two knockout matches against top opponents.

Merino has scored two goals in his first World Cup — and they're both historic.

"Honestly, it's crazy to be able to help the team once again," he said. "This time in a different way, but at the same time to believe and trust that the opposing goalkeeper could make a mistake and to stay alert. ... I prepare for when the moment comes, and hopefully they keep coming."

Merino is the first to admit he also needed luck, and Belgium keeper Senne Lammens provided it after he was forced into his first World Cup match in the 71st minute by an injury to starter Thibaut Courtois.

Merino came on in the 86th minute and scored on his second touch of the match, charging into the box and pouncing after Lammens lost control of Pau Cubarsí's long shot.

Fabián Ruiz scored a rebound goal in the 30th minute for Spain, but Belgium forward Charles De Ketelaere evened it with the first goal allowed by the Spanish team in the entire World Cup in the 41st minute.

Merino's clutch goal against an upset-minded Belgium sent La Roja to the semifinals for the first time since they won the World Cup in 2010. A powerhouse matchup with France has been anticipated since the draw was announced late last year, and Spain was grateful to secure its spot.

"We came here for this, to play against the best teams in the world," Merino said. "We are confident in our possibilities, at the same time respecting the opposition. This is one of those games that you dream of when you're a kid, and now we have the chance to compete against a massive rival. Hopefully we'll get the win."

Spain and France will meet Tuesday in Arlington, Texas, in a matchup anticipated for years. Neither team has lost at this year's World Cup.

"It will be a clash of giants," Spain coach Luis De La Fuente said through a translator. "We are capable of winning this game — and not just now, but I would have said this a few weeks ago as well. They are a great giant of football, but I trust our team."

Courtois made four saves, but the Real Madrid keeper went down to the grass in the second half after a long kick. He received treatment during the hydration break, but broke down in tears when coach Rudi Garcia removed him moments later.

Only Germany's Manuel Neuer has played more World Cup matches than Courtois' 21. Lammens, the capable Manchester United keeper, was forced to become the first goalkeeper other than Courtois to play for Belgium in the last four World Cup tournaments — and he wasn't able to make the play that would have kept it level.

"We were on equal footing with Spain, and we have nothing to feel bad about," Garcia said. "In the first half, they only had one chance, but they were very efficient. Unfortunately, to beat a team of this caliber, you need luck on your side as well, and it was too much for us to get into the semifinals."

Belgium desperately pressed for an equalizer in the final minutes with substitute forward Romelu Lukaku leading the effort, but Aymeric Laporte acrobatically volleyed the best chance out of the box in the second

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minute of injury time.

"We knew how we could hurt them, and I think we did this today," Belgium defender Brandon Mechele said. "It's a pity that it ended like this, but I think we can be proud of the tournament we played."

Spain remained unbeaten in 37 straight competitive matches since March 2023, while Belgium's streak of 18 consecutive unbeaten matches across all competitions ended.

Spain didn't allow a goal in its first five matches at this year's tournament, and goalkeeper Unai Simón hadn't conceded in a World Cup-record 650 minutes dating to Qatar.

The streaks abruptly ended when De Ketelaere muscled past Cubarsí and headed home a cross from Timothy Castagne for Belgium's tying goal.

Belgium hadn't generated anything close to a strong scoring chance before the latest big moment for De Ketelaere, the Atalanta forward who scored two goals in Belgium's 4-1 rout of the co-host U.S. on Monday.

Belgium captain Youri Tielemans was removed from the starting lineup after getting injured during warmups. He joined injured defender Amadou Onana on the sidelines.

Defense tries to sow doubt about evidence in Charlie Kirk's killing

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

PROVO, Utah (AP) — Lawyers for the man accused of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk tried to sow doubt about the case on Friday, while a prosecutor countered that authorities have "overwhelming" evidence including DNA tests and apparent confessions by the defendant.

Judge Tony Graf said he will decide if the case against Tyler Robinson should advance to trial after hearing again from the two sides on Sept. 1.

Kirk, a 31-year-old confidant of President Donald Trump, was killed as he spoke to a crowd of thousands at Utah Valley University on Sept. 10. Robinson is charged with aggravated murder and could face the death penalty.

Friday's proceedings capped a week of preliminary testimony and brought an emotional moment for Kirk's family: The court played surveillance video that prosecutors said showed Robinson on the rooftop where he allegedly fired a single bullet that hit Kirk in the neck.

Kirk's widow, Erika, clutched a tissue and watched intently as a person said to be Robinson ran across the roof. When the figure dropped to a crawl near the roof's edge, she turned and embraced Kirk's mother, Kathryn, who was crying. They held each other and kept their heads down until the video was almost over.

Defense questions reliability of evidence

Prosecutors this week presented a recorded interview with Robinson's former roommate, who said the 23-year-old defendant expressed remorse for the shooting before turning himself in. Lawyers from the Utah County Attorney's Office also offered DNA analysis that investigators said linked Robinson to both the suspected murder weapon and a tool he allegedly used to etch messages onto bullet cartridges.

Robinson's team did not offer alternative theories for Kirk's death. But one of his attorneys, Michael Burt, repeatedly questioned the reliability of DNA tests and other evidence from prosecutors.

"If you had a lot of DNA on your hand, we shook hands and I went to pick up an exhibit, a gun, and I touched the trigger of it, your DNA could be on that trigger, right?" Burt asked Caitlin Oliver, a forensic biologist with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, a federal law enforcement agency.

"It is possible. Yes," Oliver replied.

The defense attorney noted that government policies don't allow analysts to say that DNA evidence is "infallible" or that it has a "zero error rate."

Experts say the science behind DNA testing is sound.

Chief Deputy Utah County Attorney Chad Grunander questioned the relevance of bringing in Oliver as a witness. He suggested prosecutors met the burden of proof needed to advance the case to trial.

"Your honor's heard four days of testimony now. The evidence is overwhelming. It's devastating," Grunander said.

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Robinson did not testify at the hearing. One of his attorneys told the judge they had advised him not to. He has not entered a plea.

Kirk family thanks supporters

Kirk's family released a statement Friday expressing gratitude for the support and prayers they've received. "We pray that truth will continue to be heard through a process that is fair, transparent, and grounded in the facts," the statement said.

The video that prosecutors said showed Robinson running across a roof at Utah Valley University was played for the court gallery at the request of Kirk's family. Portions of the recording were zoomed in to better show the figure on the roof, and red circles were added to some images to direct the viewer's attention.

An unaltered version of that video was shown earlier.

Prosecutors on Thursday aired portions of an April 20 interview with Robinson's roommate, Lance Twiggs, who also was his reported romantic partner. The day after Kirk was shot in the neck, Robinson allegedly cried and 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 instant messaging platform, according to investigators and messages shown by prosecutors.

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

Roommate: Robinson never talked about Kirk

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.

The weeklong preliminary hearing attracted intense media coverage and spectators who lined up — sometimes overnight — for one of 14 seats in the courtroom reserved for the public.

Preliminary hearings typically don't last so long. Legal experts said the slow pace reflects a cautious approach by Graf and the large volume of evidence.

Conjecture over that evidence has fueled unsubstantiated conspiracy theories that there might have been a second shooter or that Kirk's death was staged.

"I think that the prosecution wanted to dispel those theories by putting out into the public record the overwhelming case that it possesses against Robinson," said Paul Cassell, a law professor at the University of Utah and former federal judge.

US demands Iran publicly state that Strait of Hormuz is open and Tehran won't attack ships anymore

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, JON GAMBRELL and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is demanding that Iran make a public statement saying the Strait of Hormuz is open and that ships crossing the vital corridor won't be attacked anymore, senior U.S. officials said Friday, adding that internal Tehran power struggles have made it difficult to reach and keep a deal.

The U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe to reporters the state of play with Iran, said the resumption of strikes this week came after what they described as a rogue faction of Iranian hard-liners trying to sabotage the ceasefire between Tehran and Washington.

It comes as U.S. President Donald Trump reiterated on social media Friday that he views the interim ceasefire deal as "OVER!" But he said the U.S. would continue talks aimed at putting a permanent end to the war.

The officials said Friday that Trump is giving U.S. negotiators limited time to reach a deal with Iran, but,

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in a sign of the challenges ahead, they underscored that the president had a wide range of options if talks fall apart. They also said a power struggle was playing out in real time in Iran after U.S. and Israeli strikes at the start of the war killed its longtime leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran says it wants to control Strait of Hormuz 'exclusively'

The U.S. is working on pressing Iran to make a public statement that the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for world energy markets, is open and free to ships to transit, the officials said.

On a call with reporters, the officials suggested that leaders in Iran even told their U.S. counterparts that the ship strikes were a mistake and the country hoped to continue negotiations despite that.

Trump didn't care that the firing on ships came from a hard-line faction and responded with more powerful counterattacks, showing Iran that there would be consequences no matter who was behind it, the officials said.

But moments before the U.S. officials spoke, Tehran's diplomat at the United Nations told reporters that any activity in the Strait of Hormuz, including its opening or demining operations, "rests exclusively with Iran."

"Any attempt, by external actors, to interfere with or establish a power arrangement would violate the (interim deal), and undermine its implementation, delay the restoration of normal commercial navigation, jeopardize maritime safety, and increase regional tensions," Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani said outside the U.N. Security Council.

Iran has said the strait must now be under its sole control and that vessels should begin to pay fees to Tehran — even though the world for decades has considered it an international waterway. About a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed through the strait before the war began.

Iran's grip on the strait during the conflict led to a global energy crisis, though oil prices have sharply dropped since wartime highs of \$120 a barrel.

Any nuclear deal will require Iran to turn over enriched material

The U.S. officials said to reporters Friday that any deal on Iran's nuclear program would require Tehran to turn over its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. If the U.S. does not reach a deal with Iran to turn over its nuclear material, it has military options to ensure that it remains buried underground forever, the officials said. They did not detail those options.

The highly enriched material that could potentially be used to make a nuclear weapon is believed to be buried after strikes the U.S. launched on Iran last summer. Iran says its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes.

The officials said they would never reach a nuclear deal with Iran if it would not first abide by terms of the ceasefire deal and stop renewed attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

That struggle underscores the long-term challenges the Trump administration faces in the wake of the war it started and expected to wrap up months ago. Trump in late February broke off talks with Iran over its nuclear program and launched the military campaign, saying he was taking the action because Tehran was attempting to rebuild its program and develop long-range missiles.

He faces political pressure in the U.S. to bring the conflict and its economic impact to a close and avoid the kind of prolonged Middle East conflict he had campaigned against.

Unclaimed strikes came after US ended its attacks

No one claimed responsibility Friday for airstrikes that hit Iran after the U.S. said it finished its attacks, leaving questions about who else may be targeting the Islamic Republic.

On Friday, Iranian state media quoted Esmail Kousari, a member of the Iranian parliament's national security committee and a former commander in the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, as warning the UAE would "pay the price for its cooperation with the United States." He accused the Emirates of having a "behind-the-scenes" role in the recent U.S. attacks.

U.S. Central Command spokesperson Capt. Tim Hawkins said there were "no operational updates" after Trump's pronouncement about the ceasefire.

Gulf Arab states, which Iran has targeted repeatedly since the war began Feb. 28, did not immediately

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respond to requests for comment Friday about the strikes. Israel, which took part in the Iran war, also has not claimed any recent attacks on Iran.

The strikes Thursday, just as Iran prepared to bury the late Khamenei, hit areas across southern Iran. The country's theocracy hasn't directly blamed anyone, though one lawmaker warned the United Arab Emirates about allegedly providing support to the U.S. campaign against Iran.

Iran responded to the strikes Thursday by launching a wider volley of attacks across the Mideast, targeting Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar. One person was reportedly hurt in Kuwait as air defense systems targeted the incoming fire across the region.

Mediators and allies regroup after strikes

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi plans to discuss the strait with his Omani counterpart at a meeting Saturday in Oman, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency said. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told his country's state broadcaster TRT that he believed "a solution can be reached" this weekend between Iran and Oman, which lie on opposite sides of the narrow waterway.

The U.S. continues to urge mariners to travel on a southern route through Oman's territorial waters to avoid Iran.

The leader of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, traveled to Kuwait immediately after the Iranian attack for a meeting with the small, oil-rich nation's ruling emir. Gulf Arab countries also held calls with Qatar's foreign minister. He has been deeply involved, along with Pakistan, in mediating Iran-U.S. talks.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he spoke separately Friday with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and with Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and stressed to both the need for restraint and diplomacy.

Israel's government said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with Trump on Thursday night, with Trump updating Netanyahu "on American moves in the Gulf."

Israel Katz, Israel's defense minister, also renewed threats that his nation stood ready to confront Iran if needed.

"If we will have to return, we will return with even greater force," Katz told a military ceremony.

Detainees tell their lawyer an ICE officer shot a Houston driver through a passenger window

By LEKAN OYEKANMI, JACK BROOK and RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press/Report for America

HOUSTON (AP) — Three men inside a van who witnessed the fatal shooting of the driver by an immigration officer in Houston said the Mexican man was shot through a passenger window and that the officer was never threatened, a lawyer who has spoken with them said Friday.

The shooting Tuesday during an attempted traffic stop by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in Houston has revived critical voices deriding the Trump administration's immigration crackdown and how ICE operates. Immigration arrests around the country recently surged to 10,000 over a five-day period, fueled in part by massive Congressional funding.

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, has released no evidence to support the officer's story that Lorenzo Salgado Araujo ignored their commands and rammed into an ICE vehicle with his white van, or that the officer fired in self-defense.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Sylvia Garcia has said the acting director of ICE told her officers thought someone in the van, but not Salgado Araujo, had a final order of removal but did not share a name.

The officers were not wearing body cameras and neither ICE nor DHS have released photos, videos or other evidence from the scene.

The men tell an attorney that the ICE story is untrue

Salgado Araujo was a 52-year-old homebuilder who was shot and killed as he was driving his crew to a construction site. His family said he had lived in the U.S. for more than 35 years, had no criminal record and was close to finishing the long process of obtaining legal status when he was killed.

ICE detained the other three men in the van and they all told a lawyer that no officer was in front of

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the van or even in danger.

"After speaking with these men, I have no doubt that what they're saying is the truth. I know that these agents — the agency — is going to try to cover it up," attorney Hugo Balderas-Ibarra said during a news conference.

Images of the van after the shooting appear to show no damage, he said.

ICE has not released the names of the detained men, but family members said they have been able to briefly talk with them. Salgado Araujo's brother was among those arrested.

Garcia said at the same news conference it was unsurprising that Salgado Araujo drove off when ICE tried to stop his vehicle, given that their vehicles were unmarked and had no lights.

"What would you do if you were being followed by someone and the cars were unmarked?" Garcia said.

Salgado Araujo was at least the eighth person to die during the Trump administration's immigration enforcement campaign. No immigration officers have been charged in the killings and video footage in several previous shootings has contradicted the accounts of federal officers.

The detained men say ICE is pressuring them to self-deport

ICE is pressuring the men to self-deport, which would make it harder for them to share their version of events with investigators or others, said Juana Degollado, who said her stepfather Daniel Tirado Pantoja is among the detained men. She said he has no legal permission to live in the U.S. but has no criminal record.

"It is extremely important that we preserve the integrity of this investigation," Balderas-Ibarra said. "That will all be out the window if they are deported."

DHS said allegations that the men have been pressured to leave the country are "categorically false."

DHS said Thursday that officers investigating a tip weeks earlier saw two white vans at the address of a target. While heading to that address Tuesday, officers saw a white van and someone inside who resembled the person they were looking for, the department said in a statement.

"No one in that van had warrants or any legal problem," Degollado told The Associated Press in a text message.

ICE refuses to release officer's name or other information

DHS said it will not release the officer's name because they could face threats and violence and their family could be at risk.

DHS also has not responded to requests for other information, including how long the officer has worked for ICE or whether anyone involved in the shooting is on administrative leave.

Unlike some previous deaths involving federal immigration officers, few photos or videos surrounding the shooting have emerged publicly in the days since Salgado Araujo's death.

The League of United Latin American Citizens offered a \$5,000 reward for video or other evidence, but the positions of the vehicles means surveillance cameras in the area were blocked from recording the shooting, CEO Juan Proaño said.

Local prosecutors are talking to witnesses

Local prosecutors were not invited into the investigation by federal officials but have spent the past three days in the Houston neighborhood looking for surveillance footage and talking to witnesses, Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare said.

Teare said anyone with video or other information must share it with his office so the truth about the shooting can be determined.

"We will go to the ends of the earth to collect all the evidence, so that we can eventually let the public know what happened," Teare said.

The FBI is tightly controlling the evidence in the case, but Houston Mayor John Whitmire said he wants a local independent investigation and the police chief will meet with federal investigators next week to see what can be done.

"We recognize that it is a federal police agency that was out of control Tuesday morning," Whitmire said.

Houston police do not work with ICE and the mayor said he found out about the shooting from the media.

Salgado Araujo's family said they found out he was dead through the ICE statement instead of directly

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from the agency. Garcia said officers kept his belongings and sent him to the hospital where he died without including his name.

US stocks rise as Wall Street shows it's still hungry for AI winners

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks ticked higher Friday after Wall Street showed its appetite is still big for winners of the artificial-intelligence boom.

The S&P 500 rose 0.4% to close out its fourth winning week in the last five. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 149 points, or 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 0.3%.

SK Hynix, a giant South Korean maker of memory chips, shone in the debut of its stock trading on the Nasdaq. After raising roughly \$26.5 billion by selling American depositary shares at a price of \$149 each, it jumped immediately after trading began in the midday hours and finished with a gain of 13.1%.

SK Hynix's stock in Seoul has already surged 634% over the last year thanks to euphoria around AI. The boom has created real profits due to surging demand for computer memory. But it's also raised worries that AI stock prices have shot too high and that all the world's spending on chips and data centers won't be able to produce enough productivity and profit growth to make it worth it.

That's led to sharp recent swings for AI stocks, which have grown into some of Wall Street's most influential because of their huge sizes.

Nvidia was the strongest single force lifting the S&P 500 Friday after rising 4%.

Beyond the uncertainty about AI, the focus on Wall Street is shifting to the upcoming reporting season for companies' profits during the spring.

Delta Air Lines said it was able to absorb higher fuel prices from April through June because of strong demand from customers to fly, including a wide range of corporate travelers. That helped it report profit and revenue for the spring that topped analysts' expectations, and it gave a forecasted range for upcoming profit in the summer whose midpoint was above analysts' expectations.

Delta's stock fell 1.8%, though, after coming into the day with a strong 28.2% rise for the year so far.

Companies across industries will need to produce big growth in profits to justify the big moves for their stock prices, which are broadly near records. Next week will feature earnings reports from many of the biggest U.S. banks, including Bank of America, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs and Wells Fargo on Tuesday alone.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Circle Internet Group rose 5%. The company behind the USDC cryptocurrency, which is supposed to keep the value of \$1, said it won U.S. regulatory approval to establish a bank. It will operate under the name Circle National Trust, and CEO Jeremy Allaire said the move "marks a defining step in bringing blockchain technology and digital assets into the core of the U.S. financial system."

WD-40's stock jumped 10.6% after reporting much stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 31.75 points to 7,575.39. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 149.60 to 52,367.01, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 74.72 to 26,281.61.

In the oil market, prices continued to pare jumps from earlier in the week on worries about how the war with Iran will affect the global flow of crude.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil, the international standard, dipped 0.4% to \$76.01.

That's above its \$72 price from the start of the week, but it's still well below its wartime peak of nearly \$120. The worry is that continued fighting could block oil tankers from the Strait of Hormuz and prevent the delivery of crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide.

President Donald Trump said on his social-media platform that he agreed to continue talks with Iran but also that the United States told Iran "that the Cease Fire is OVER!"

In the bond market, Treasury yields ticked higher. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.56% from 4.54% late Thursday.

High yields have weighed on financial markets worldwide. Yields have climbed on worries about expensive

oil and high inflation, which could push 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.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed. South Korea's Kospi jumped 2.5%, and Japan's Nikkei 225 rose 1.2% for two of the world's bigger moves, but stocks fell 1% in Shanghai.

Wimbledon defeat makes Djokovic realize he's 'blessed and cursed' by the success of his career

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Novak Djokovic didn't dwell on Centre Court after getting dominated by Jannik Sinner in the Wimbledon semifinals.

The 39-year-old Djokovic enjoyed a warm, smile-filled embrace with his 24-year-old opponent at the net after the 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 defeat Friday, quickly packed up his tennis bags and then waved to the boisterous crowd as he held one hand to his chest to show his appreciation as he walked off.

Will the seven-time Wimbledon champion ever be back to play on these hallowed lawns again?

Only time — something that Djokovic is running out of — will tell.

It's been nearly three years since Djokovic won his record-extending 24th Grand Slam singles title at the 2023 U.S. Open. And despite reaching the semifinals at all four Grand Slams last year and reaching a final and another semi in two of three Slams this year — he acknowledges that's not enough.

"For 99% of the players, that would be a very good Grand Slam result," Djokovic said. "For me, it's good but not good enough, because I'm blessed and cursed to be used to something of a highest degree in terms of results and achievements.

"I always have the highest expectations for myself," Djokovic added. "So it's kind of that internal battle really of what I've been through for the 20-plus years of my career, what the goals were always, the expectations, and trying to balance it out and really be a little more humble in that sense."

Still, Djokovic expressed interest in playing Wimbledon when he's 40: "I would like to, at least one more time," he said.

"I feel when I'm healthy," Djokovic added, "I'm still able to play as a top-five player, still able to compete at the highest level."

For Sinner, it was a measure of revenge after Djokovic won their last meeting in five sets in this year's Australian Open semifinals.

"Playing against Novak," Sinner said, "what he's still showing is true inspiration."

Aiming to defend his title at the grass-court Grand Slam, the top-ranked Sinner will face second-seeded Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final.

Zverev ended the "Ferytale" run of British wild card Arthur Fery with an overpowering 7-6 (0), 6-2, 6-4 victory earlier as the star-studded crowd on Centre Court witnessed two one-way contests.

Zverev will be playing for another major trophy a month after winning his first Grand Slam title at Roland Garros.

If there were any lingering questions over Sinner's physical status after his meltdown at the French Open, they should be answered now.

Sinner blasted his way past Djokovic and showed off the kind of dominance he displayed before that second-round defeat in Paris.

"I knew mentally," Sinner said, "that today I had to raise my level, which I've done."

Andre Agassi attributed Sinner's performance in part to Djokovic: "What these guys can do now is all because he has shown them what's possible," Agassi said on the BBC.

No heat issues for Sinner

It was another warm day in southwest London, with the temperature rising to about 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 Celsius). It was also breezy, though, and a bit cloudier than in recent days.

Still, it felt nothing like the suffocating heat and humidity in Paris when Sinner wasted a big lead against

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Juan Manuel Cerundolo, who was ranked No. 56, and had his 30-match winning streak ended.

Djokovic was coming off the longest quarterfinal in Wimbledon history, when he outlasted Felix Auger-Aliassime after 5 hours, 15 minutes on Tuesday.

Sinner, by contrast, hadn't lost a set since he was pushed to five by Miomir Kecmanovic in the first round. From the start, Sinner pushed Djokovic back with his powerful groundstrokes and came up with big serves in big moments.

When Sinner faced his only break point of the match early in the third set as late-afternoon shadows started creeping across the court, he produced an ace.

Sinner has won 9 straight vs. Zverev

Zverev, whose breakthrough at Roland Garros came in his fourth Grand Slam final, is attempting to become the first man in the professional era (since 1968) to win his second major title at the next event immediately after his first.

Sinner has won his last nine meetings with Zverev and 14 straight sets.

"I have to trust myself and I have to believe that I can win and that's what I'm going to do," Zverev said before he knew who his opponent would be.

The 114th-ranked Fery, who grew up five minutes from the All England Club and played at Stanford University, was attempting to become the first wild card to reach the final since Goran Ivanisevic won Wimbledon in 2001.

Zverev did well not to let the pro-Fery crowd get behind the local player too much and a double fault from Fery early in the first-set tiebreaker put Zverev in control.

British cheering

The British spectators did their best to encourage Fery early on, chanting his name between points as they sipped their Pimm's under their wide-brimmed hats.

When it was over, Fery walked off to a standing ovation and applauded the crowd in return.

"I know that 99.99% of the stadium was wanting Arthur to win," Zverev said. "But it was still such an incredible atmosphere. It was such a fair crowd as well."

The women's final on Saturday features two Czech players, Karolina Muchova against Linda Noskova.

Students abducted in May by Islamic militants in Nigeria are rescued, government says

By DYEPKAZAH SHIBAYAN Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Students abducted in May by Islamic militants in Nigeria's southwestern Oyo state have been rescued, the government said Friday.

Government spokesman Bayo Onanuga did not specify the total number of students rescued, but authorities said at the time of the abductions on May 15 that more than 40 people had been abducted. One of the teachers abducted alongside the students was killed shortly afterward.

Eight militants were arrested as part of the operation, while an unspecified number of the militants were killed, Onanuga said.

The abductions in a southern state had represented an escalation of the country's security crisis because most such abductions previously had taken place in the north.

"This successful military operation has ended the siege and standoff of over 50 days and has brought relief to the entire nation and the affected families in particular," Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said in a statement.

In the same week as the Oyo abduction, dozens of children were kidnapped in Borno, the epicenter of Nigeria's security crisis.

Abductions at schools are common in Nigeria, where militant groups target them to put pressure on the government and extract ransoms.

EPA promised a Make America Healthy Again agenda. It has yet to materialize, frustrating activists

By MATTHEW DALY and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Last December, after Make America Healthy Again activists drew up a petition to get him fired, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lee Zeldin pledged to release a formal agenda of MAHA priorities that his agency would pursue, including protections against harmful chemicals and other health concerns.

But eight months after its first mention and after repeated promises it was being drafted, the so-called MAHA agenda is nowhere to be found. When asked for a status update this week, an EPA spokesperson said MAHA is an ongoing effort, not a single report.

The apparent reversal on the release of a formal environmental health agenda is the latest in a cascade of disappointments for Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s MAHA movement, who say they've lost faith that the Trump administration will take any significant action on pesticides, chemicals or other issues they view as key to address America's chronic disease epidemic. It also reflects the EPA's relentless rollback of environmental regulations even in the face of pressure from an important voting bloc that has supported President Donald Trump.

"I had really hoped that there would be specific steps that were taken through a MAHA agenda," said activist Kelly Ryerson, whose social media account "Glyphosate Girl" focuses on nontoxic food systems. "We haven't had any of the wins that we were requesting."

Many in the diverse coalition of MAHA activists that Trump credits for helping him win back the White House say they plan to vote on issues over party in November's congressional elections, raising the political stakes of their increasingly public tensions with the Republican administration.

"People are done with the profits of corporations being prioritized over public health," said Alexandra Muñoz, a molecular toxicologist who collaborates with activists on certain issues. "And I think that will have an important role in the midterms."

MAHA is frustrated with EPA's actions

"Trump's EPA," as Zeldin frequently calls the agency, has vigorously pursued a deregulatory agenda. Earlier this year, Zeldin proposed overturning the landmark finding that climate change is a threat to human health. He moved to roll back dozens of environmental regulations in what he called "the greatest day of deregulation our nation has seen," froze billions of dollars for clean energy and upended agency research.

At the same time, Zeldin has touted multiple "MAHA wins," some of which activists say are anything but. For example, he said the agency intends to regulate some chemicals called phthalates for environmental and workplace risks, but didn't address the thousands of consumer products that contain the ingredients.

This week, the EPA diverted from past assurances that the MAHA report was in its "final stages," telling The Associated Press in an email that the EPA's actions should speak for themselves.

"The notion that MAHA is a single document waiting to be unveiled fundamentally misrepresents how we operate," an agency spokesperson said, adding that work on MAHA priorities is "active and expanding every day."

Ryerson and other MAHA activists said they've engaged with agency officials about changes they'd like to see, and occasionally succeeded. Her network of farmers worked with the administration on a recent executive order to advance regenerative agriculture. But she said EPA then used the order to justify new proposed uses for various herbicides, a move she called a "slap in the face."

The same week, the Supreme Court dealt another blow to the MAHA cause in siding with pesticide maker Bayer in a ruling related to its legal liability for alleged harm caused by its Roundup weedkiller. The Trump administration had backed the company in the case.

Environmental activists say the rise of Kennedy and his MAHA mission has rippled across the administration, raising the public's awareness of pesticides — and expectations that Trump's administration would act.

"If RFK and the MAHA movement hadn't put that issue in the center of the public spotlight, no one would be scrutinizing this nearly as closely," said Sarah Starman, a senior food and agriculture campaigner at the

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nonprofit Friends of the Earth.

EPA says getting microplastics out of drinking water is complicated

In a well-publicized gesture aimed in part at the MAHA movement, Zeldin in April included microplastics and pharmaceuticals on a list of contaminants that could be regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Activists had pressured Zeldin for months to crack down on microplastics and other environmental contaminants.

But in a reversal in late June, the EPA did not include microplastics or pharmaceuticals on a list of chemicals it plans to test for under a mandatory program used to collect information about concerning chemicals in drinking water that could be harming human health.

The move rendered the EPA's earlier public health promises "functionally toothless," said Betsy Southerland, a former senior official in EPA's water office.

Zeldin said on social media that "the technology to test and treat for microplastics in drinking water is still in development." The EPA said in a Federal Register notice that it was "not feasible to develop a drinking water analytical method within the statutory timeframe."

After making "a big splash in the press" on microplastics, "EPA has quietly stalled that momentum," said Southerland.

A White House Make America Healthy Again Report, released a few months into Trump's second term, identified long-term exposure to environmental chemicals — including those widely found in plastics — as a leading cause of chronic disease in children.

Former industry lobbyists now have leading roles at EPA

Jeremy Symons, a senior adviser at the Environmental Protection Network, a group of former EPA employees and political appointees who are critical of the Trump administration, said Zeldin "pays lip service to MAHA, but sadly he is actually making Americans less safe from toxic chemicals."

Alongside MAHA's influence on the Trump administration, industry lobbyists have made inroads at the EPA.

Kyle Kunkler, a former lobbyist for the soybean industry, leads pesticide policy at the EPA. The agency recently allowed continued use of dicamba, a weedkiller that has been linked to increased risk for some cancers.

Zen Honeycutt, a MAHA activist and founding executive director of Moms Across America, said the move is "what happens when the EPA allows itself to be pressured by corporations and by business."

EPA also employs other former industry insiders. Nancy Beck, a former executive at the chemical lobbying group the American Chemistry Council, is a top official in EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. Lynn Dekleva, another former chemistry council executive, serves as a Beck deputy.

The EPA said Kunkler and other political appointees have consulted with agency ethics officials to resolve any potential conflicts of interest. The MAHA movement has "driven this agency's work since President Trump's first day in office," a spokesperson said in an email, citing various initiatives including \$945 million in grants to help states and communities cut "forever chemicals" known as PFAS in drinking water and identifying 30 drinking water contaminants proposed for nationwide monitoring.

On Thursday, the agency announced it was teaming up with Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to protect consumers from heavy metals and other contaminants in food.

But for Ryerson and others, the lack of a promised MAHA agenda reads as a tactic to escape accountability. "It absolves them of any failures, especially when it comes to midterms," Ryerson said. "They won't have to point to some list that they haven't been able to achieve really anything on."

Donald Trump ousts election commission members in latest push to reshape US voting process

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

President Donald Trump has ousted members of a bipartisan federal election commission that resisted his efforts to require would-be voters to document their U.S. citizenship before registering.

The White House on Friday confirmed the executive action against members of the Election Assistance

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Commission, which distributes federal grants to states, oversees the testing of voting systems and maintains the national voter registration form.

Though the move likely won't have major effects on the November midterms, it's the latest instance of the Republican president trying to exert White House influence over how U.S. elections are conducted, and it's the first test of his newly expanded presidential power after the Supreme Court ruled recently that the president can fire members of independent agency boards without cause.

"The President, and head of the Executive Branch, reserves the right to remove individuals that may not be totally aligned with the important task of securing America's elections and ensuring every legal vote is counted. The Slaughter decision gives the President precedence to do so," said a White House statement to AP.

The president removed the four-seat commission's two Democratic members, Thomas Hicks and Benjamin Hovland. The panel's Republican member, Christy McCormick resigned. Former Republican commissioner Donald Palmer already had left his post voluntarily earlier this year. The changes were first reported by VoteBeat, a news outlet that covers elections and voting across the U.S.

Trump has repeatedly tried to reshape voting regulations, even though the U.S. Constitution grants control of elections to the states and not the president. Citing that separation of powers, courts have blocked most of Trump's two executive orders that sought to reshape voting. Trump has also launched an investigation of his 2020 loss, which he continues to falsely insist was due to fraud, and this week his administration threatened states if they did not try to purge what federal officials believe are noncitizens from their voter rolls.

Still, Trump has largely been powerless to change election processes through executive fiat and David Becker, a former Department of Justice attorney who runs the Center for Election Innovation & Research, said his purge of the EAC wouldn't alter that.

"This doesn't really change anything about how our elections will be run, and how states are successfully ensuring secure, convenient, safe elections," Becker wrote on the social media site BlueSky Friday morning.

Critics accuse Trump of damaging voters' trust

On Capitol Hill, the leading Democrats with election oversight responsibility said Trump, rather than bolstering U.S. election integrity, is further politicizing the voting process.

"President Trump is trying to dismantle yet another independent guardrail of our democracy designed to keep elections fair and secure," said Sen. Alex Padilla, D-California, and Rep. Joe Morelle, D-New York. "Purging commissioners just months before the midterm elections and further gutting support for our state and local elections officials is a blatant part of his plan to politicize our elections and enable more unlawful and dangerous election interference."

Padilla is the ranking member of the Senate Rules Committee, and Morelle is ranking member of the House Administration Committee.

The lawmakers noted that the Supreme Court's conservative majority enabled Trump's move with its decision to "upend decades of executive power to appease the President."

Staff at the Election Assistance Commission did not immediately respond Friday to a request for comment on the agency's operations moving forward.

While the White House statement did not offer a specific reason for Trump's action, the commission has previously declined to change the national voter registration form to require documentation of an applicant's U.S. citizenship, as Trump's urged in a sweeping March 2025 executive order on U.S. elections. Though the form itself does not require citizenship documents, voter registration materials from the agency do state clearly that it already is illegal to falsely claim U.S. citizenship to vote.

A federal judge blocked the order, ruling it exceeded the president's authority since the U.S. Constitution grants authority over elections management and oversight to Congress and the states. The administration has indicated it will appeal.

Trump hasn't said whether he'll pick new members

It was not clear whether Trump planned to nominate new members immediately or leave the positions vacant — a move that, months ahead of midterm elections, could prevent the agency from distributing

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new grants to state or local elections offices and perhaps complicate its role in overseeing testing and certification of voting systems around the country.

"The Administration from the start has been working across all agencies and local partners to safeguard elections from fraud and abuse, and investing in a strong infrastructure to sustain that mission especially in the midterm elections," the White House said.

Congress created the commission as part of the Help America Vote Act, a bipartisan law signed by Republican President George W. Bush in 2002. The act requires the commission to include two Democrats and two Republicans, nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Hicks and McCormick were appointed by President Barack Obama. Trump appointed Hovland during his first presidency.

According to VoteBeat, Hicks and Hovland were notified of their removal by an email signed by Morgan DeWitt Snow, the deputy director of presidential personnel in the Executive Office of the President.

More court fights are always possible

Hicks and Hovland could challenge their dismissals, but that ultimately could require the Supreme Court to revisit two decisions it just issued on the president's power over independent agencies.

The court ruled 6-3 last month in the case of former Federal Trade Commission member Rebecca Slaughter that Trump had wide executive authority to fire political appointees of independent executive agencies. Trump had fired Slaughter without cause despite a provision of federal law that required a reason and a nearly century-old Supreme Court precedent insulating independent agency heads from presidential whims.

The court's six conservatives said that the previous restrictions on presidential prerogatives violated the Constitution's separation of powers. The logic extends to other agencies, including the National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, where Trump also has fired board members.

In the separate case of Federal Reserve Board member Lisa Cook, whom Trump had tried to fire, a 5-4 majority deviated from the Slaughter decision and ruled that the president could not fire central bank governors without cause. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh sided with the court's three liberals in the Cook case. They justified their exception to their Slaughter reasoning by citing the central bank's unique structure as congressionally chartered but independent, quasi-private institution whose "appearance of independence is key to the Federal Reserve's design" and its role in setting monetary policy that shapes the U.S. and world economy.

Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

Trump will let bipartisan housing bill become law without signing in protest over GOP voter ID law

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will let the bipartisan housing bill approved by Congress become law without his signature, saying Friday that he was refusing to put his name on it because of the little progress made in passing a strict voter ID bill that he has been pushing.

"I will not sign the Housing Bill, which has been fully approved by Congress and sent to the White House, in PROTEST over the fact that the United States Senate is not capable of passing THE SAVE AMERICA ACT," Trump posted on social media.

Trump had 10 days until the Friday deadline to sign the bill, issue a veto, or allow the measure to take effect without his signature. He has chosen to let the measure become law without his express approval, undercutting his administration's claims that he considers it a priority to combat inflation.

Trump's rejection of the bipartisan housing legislation exacerbates tensions with his own party in a midterm election year and cuts short their efforts to address a key voter concern about rising costs. His post comes more than a week after he canceled plans to sign the bipartisan legislation, announcing he was using it as leverage in his push for a strict voter ID bill.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act aims to lower the cost of housing and spur more home construc-

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tion. It's the broadest federal effort in decades to address America's housing affordability problems, as state and local regulations have made it difficult to build in many of the communities that are also sources of job growth and economic opportunity. White House economists estimated earlier this year a national shortage of 10 million homes and the bill could help to close a portion of that gap.

But Trump called the bill "a yawn" and "so unimportant" compared to legislation that would require proof of citizenship for all voters.

He surprised Republican lawmakers on June 24, when, shortly before a planned signing ceremony at the Capitol, he announced he would not approve the bill until lawmakers first passed the voting legislation.

That bill, the SAVE America Act, doesn't have enough Republican support to pass.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said after submitting the housing bill to the White House that he told Trump he should get the "fattest black marker you have, and sign your name really big on that."

"I hope he does sign it," Johnson told reporters at the time. "If he doesn't, it's still law. We'll still celebrate it."

He said he also understood Trump was trying to make a point that the elections bill is the top priority. "And I think he's making it very effectively," Johnson said.

Still, Trump's decision not to sign the bill gave Democrats an opening to criticize him on the issue of affordability.

"His priorities couldn't be clearer: higher cost for families and more power for himself," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said on X.

The housing bill passed the Senate on an 85-5 vote and the House approved it with an 358-32 vote.

That legislation seeks to cut federal housing rules, slim-down environmental reviews, make it faster to build homes and limit the ability of corporations to buy single-family homes.

The bill does not address all of the causes of the country's housing woes, including a shortage of construction workers, climbing insurance costs and wages that have not risen fast enough for renters and buyers.

But the bill has drawn support from the real estate industry and housing advocates.

The U.S. housing market has been a driver of recent affordability challenges as skyrocketing prices have kept aspiring buyers out of the market. The National Association of Realtors said Thursday that the 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.

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

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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 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 they used to wear a Star of David necklace, but now worries that wearing it could give people the incorrect impression that they support 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," Rosendorn 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

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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."

A US license could let Ukraine produce Patriot missiles, but it won't be simple or quick

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump's pledge to give Ukraine a license to produce Patriot air-defense systems could mark a major breakthrough for Kyiv, but experts and Ukrainian officials warn that turning the idea into real weapons would likely take years.

Speaking Wednesday alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, Trump said the United States would allow Ukraine to make the U.S.-designed systems that Kyiv has long sought to shield its cities and infrastructure from Russian missiles and drones.

"We'll give them the right to make Patriots. We'll show them how to do it," Trump said. "I think they can produce them pretty quickly."

But the statement left open a crucial question: What exactly would Ukraine be allowed to produce?

"America has recognized Ukraine as a country that is ready to do this," Zelenskyy told reporters Thursday, adding that Ukrainian and U.S. diplomats and defense officials must now work "without pauses" to finalize the licensing arrangements.

A license might not cover the complete Patriot system

Patriot interceptor missiles, which are fired to shoot down incoming missiles, drones and aircraft, are produced by U.S. defense contractors Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, part of RTX.

A production license would not automatically allow Ukraine to manufacture complete Patriot batteries — including launchers, radar systems, command posts and missiles — from scratch. It could instead cover narrower parts of the system, such as interceptor missiles, final assembly from imported component kits or production of selected components.

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Serhii Beskrestnov, an adviser to Ukraine's defense minister, said a U.S. license would typically come with technical documentation, training for specialists, supplier contacts and foreign consultants to help launch manufacturing.

Other experts say the first step would likely be more limited than full domestic production.

Anatolii Khrapchynskyi, development director of the Fly Group Ukraine defense company, said Trump's wording was ambiguous because he referred broadly to producing "Patriots," without specifying whether he meant missiles, launchers, radar systems, command centers or components.

Missile production alone involves a vast supply chain, Khrapchynskyi said, with hundreds of companies making parts such as control surfaces, engines, guidance systems and communications equipment.

The Trump administration has not offered details about the Ukraine license, but an administration official said the U.S. is significantly accelerating and expanding Patriot production to meet growing demand and is forming industrial partnerships with allies and partners globally to deliver Patriots. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Any additional Patriot systems would enter a war that has shown how quickly weapons production can expand when a country receives designs, technical support and access to components. Ukraine has become a leader in the manufacture of cheap, expendable drone systems. Russia has scaled up domestic production of Iranian-designed Shahed-type attack drones, known in Russia as Gerans, at a factory in Tatarstan.

But experts say Patriot interceptors are far more complex, requiring precision guidance, advanced radar technology, solid-fuel rocket motors, military-grade electronics and strict certification standards.

Full production could take years

Yehor Chernev, deputy chairman of Ukraine's parliamentary committee on national security, defense and intelligence, said the legal and bureaucratic process could be launched within months, but implementing production would take years.

Even if Ukraine received complete component kits from abroad, Chernev said, it would likely need at least 18 to 24 months to launch its first pilot production line, followed by more time to complete the first weapons.

The PAC-3 missile, designed to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles, is among the most sophisticated parts of the Patriot family. Producing a PAC-3 MSE missile in the United States takes about 24 months, and producing its solid-fuel rocket motor requires around 30 months, he said.

Chernev said some technology, especially the missile's active radar seeker, is so sensitive that Washington would be unlikely to transfer full documentation for Ukraine to manufacture them from scratch. That means Ukraine might have to import some of the most complex components and focus first on assembly, integration or less sensitive parts of the supply chain.

Dr. Thomas Withington, an analyst specializing in electronic warfare, radar and military communications at the Royal United Services Institute, said expectations should be managed.

Ukraine's existing defense industry could help, Withington said, but the country would still need time to set up facilities, train workers and secure the necessary supply chains.

"This is not going to be a fix for the air-defense threats Ukraine is going to face tomorrow."

Other countries have produced Patriot systems

The United States has allowed Patriot-related production abroad before, and experts say those examples show that licensed production is possible but slow.

Japan has produced Patriot missiles under license for decades. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has assembled PAC-3 missiles under a licensed agreement with Lockheed Martin, and Japan later loosened its postwar arms export restrictions to allow the sale of U.S.-designed Patriot missiles back to the United States — a move that could indirectly help replenish stocks used to support Ukraine.

Germany offers a more recent example. Raytheon and MBDA Deutschland announced in 2022 a plan to produce Patriot GEM-T missiles in Germany. A major NATO procurement contract followed in 2024 for up to 1,000 missiles, and a new production facility in Schrobenehausen is expected to play a role in supplying Ukraine and replenishing European inventories.

But Ukraine would face an additional challenge that Japan and Germany did not: Russian strikes.

Khrapchynskyi said any facility helping Ukraine defend its airspace would become a priority target for Moscow. Production would have to be placed in protected locations, potentially underground or inside shelters, he said.

That makes the license more of a long-term strategic step than an immediate battlefield solution. If implemented, it could help Ukraine become a future producer of air-defense weapons and reduce dependence on allies whose own stockpiles are under strain.

"It would not solve the current missile shortage in 2026," he said, "but it would lay the foundation for Ukraine to become one of Europe's leading producers of air-defense systems in the future."

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.

Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin have been recovering their rockets since 2015, saving vast amounts of money by recycling them rather than ditching them after liftoff. SpaceX leads the pack with more than 600 landings of its first-stage Falcon boosters, steering them to ocean barges as well as landing zones near the launch pads. Just this week, SpaceX launched a booster for the 36th time, a new record.

For SpaceX's bigger and more powerful Starships making test flights out of Texas and soon to expand to Florida, the company is working to capture the returning rockets with giant mechanical arms at the launch pad.

Blue Origin started out by landing its New Shepard boosters in Texas following short flights to the edge of space, and has since recovered its bigger New Glenn boosters on a floating platform off the Florida coast.

Now that China has joined the rocket recycling boom, Japan is up next with a launch and landing attempt this weekend.

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.

In any language: English speakers are tuning into World Cup broadcasts in Spanish

By TIM REYNOLDS and OBED LAMY Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Ashleigh Hallam teaches English as a second language at her local library in Indiana. Soccer is now teaching her Spanish as a second language.

For her, this World Cup couldn't make more sense.

Hallam is among a sizable number of English-speaking people in the U.S. who are doing something these days that might be considered a bit surprising: They're watching broadcasts of World Cup matches in Spanish on Telemundo, even though they have little idea — or in some cases, no idea — what the announcers are saying.

"I can't really understand everything they're saying on Telemundo because they're speaking in Spanish,"

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Hallam said. "But you understand what's going on."

The math is simple. Census figures show that about 20% of the U.S. is Hispanic, yet Telemundo points to Nielsen ratings to show that roughly half the World Cup viewers in the U.S. have watched at least some portion of some matches in Spanish. Every match of the tournament has been available for U.S. viewers in English on Fox or FS1, on Telemundo or Universo in Spanish, and there are streaming options such as Fox One or Peacock.

Among the reasons commonly cited by viewers who spoke with The Associated Press in recent days: A fascination with famed broadcaster Andrés Cantor's "¡gooooooooool!" call. Telemundo doesn't cut away for commercials (as Fox does) during the much-maligned hydration breaks. The broadcasts, some simply find, are more entertaining. And in other cases, it's a cost-based decision: Peacock, which includes Telemundo, is lower-priced than Fox One.

Soccer as a global language, transcending a limited vocabulary

Jackson Braunius is a Michigan native who watched a U.S. game last week from a bar seat at a steakhouse in Miami Lakes, Florida. He said he speaks almost no Spanish — "I know 'cerveza,'" he said, tapping his beer glass — but didn't mind watching on Telemundo whatsoever.

"I figured out the science here," Braunius said. "When they're not talking too loud, nothing is happening. When they get loud, there's a chance. When they get real loud, it's probably going to be a goal."

Comedian Trevor Noah has been hosting World Cup watch parties on YouTube. He's made the switch to Spanish-language feeds, and the hydration break issue was a huge part of that decision.

"We're seeing the players on the pitch discussing what's happening. You see which coach is more stressed. Some players are tapping each other on the back. This is part of the game," Noah said on one of his YouTube streams. "I feel like when you cut to ads, you lose this — you lose the stress, you lose the joy, the anticipation. So, shout out again, Telemundo: Really, really amazing coverage."

Telemundo is hearing the praise, and has thanked English-speakers — as well as Noah directly — for lauding its coverage.

The good news for everyone is this: There seems to be more than enough viewers to go around right now. And the success of this tournament could lead to a bidding war for the 2030 World Cup, with some reporting the rights for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking television will be packaged together in that deal. That wasn't the case for this World Cup.

Fox Sports said that Monday night's Belgium-U.S. match saw a peak viewership total of around 41 million at one point, making it the "most-watched soccer telecast in U.S. history," the network said. In other words, the final U.S. game in this World Cup had more viewers than anything in this country since the Super Bowl — with at least 45 million viewers, on average, between Fox (33 million) and Telemundo (an estimated 12 million). The most recent Super Bowl drew an average of about 125 million viewers, according to Nielsen data.

Anglophones become hooked on Telemundo

William Kennedy of Miami is married to a Colombian woman, whose native language is Spanish. He says he knows only enough Spanish to be able to order meals in restaurants. And yet, he finds himself often watching World Cup matches on Telemundo.

If Colombia was on, the Kennedy house was watching Telemundo. If Colombia — which was ousted in penalty kicks by Switzerland on Tuesday — isn't on, Kennedy finds himself usually making his way to Telemundo anyway.

"When the American commentators are doing the game, I don't know what game they're watching. I just don't," Kennedy said. "I'd rather get the excitement in Spanish because essentially what happens is they're talking, and then they're talking really, really fast, and then they're getting loud and your brain is just like, 'Oh, something's happening — even if I don't know what's happening.'"

Hallam — who finds the World Cup has been a great way to bond further with her Spanish-speaking students — only became a big soccer fan a few years ago, when her daughter decided she wanted to play in a recreational league for elementary kids. The league needed coaches, so Hallam literally checked out a "coaching for dummies" book and began teaching herself the game.

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She kept coaching her daughter all the way through high school. Now, she's hooked on soccer and hooked on Spanish-speaking broadcasts — and plans to keep watching, even when the World Cup ends. "It's just very comforting," Hallam said. "We're really enjoyed it and I hope we get to continue. The next World Cup, we're going to watch it just like this."

Typhoon Bavi takes aim at China as Taiwan's capital shuts schools

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 155 kph (96 mph), 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 north of Taiwan on Saturday. It is forecast to make landfall in China on 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 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.

Today in History: July 11, the fall of Srebrenica

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 11, the 192nd day of 2026. There are 173 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 11, 1995, the U.N.-designated "safe haven" of Srebrenica (sreh-breh-NEET'-sah) in Bosnia-Herzegovina fell to Bosnian Serb forces, who subsequently carried out the killings of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys.

Also on this date:

In 1798, the U.S. Marine Corps was formally reestablished by a congressional act that also created the U.S. Marine Band.

In 1804, Vice President Aaron Burr mortally wounded former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton during a pistol duel in Weehawken, New Jersey. (Hamilton died the next day.)

In 1859, Big Ben, the great bell inside the famous London clock tower, chimed for the first time.

In 1864, Confederate forces led by Gen. Jubal Early began an abortive invasion of Washington, D.C.; the raid was turned back the next day.

In 1914, Babe Ruth made his Major League baseball debut, pitching the Boston Red Sox to a 4-3 victory over Cleveland.

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In 1921, fighting in the Irish War of Independence ended with a truce.

In 1960, Harper Lee's novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" was published.

In 1972, the World Chess Championship opened as grandmasters Bobby Fischer of the United States and defending champion Boris Spassky of the Soviet Union began play in Reykjavik, Iceland. (Fischer won after 21 games.)

In 1979, the abandoned U.S. space station Skylab made a spectacular return to Earth, burning up in the atmosphere and showering debris over the Indian Ocean and Australia.

In 1991, a Nigeria Airways DC-8 carrying Muslim pilgrims crashed at the Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, international airport, killing all 261 people on board.

In 2006, eight bombs hit a commuter rail network during evening rush hour in Mumbai, India, killing more than 200 people.

In 2022, President Joe Biden revealed the first image from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, the farthest humanity had ever seen in both time and distance, closer to the dawn of the universe and the edge of the cosmos.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Susan Seaforth Hayes is 83. Actor Bruce McGill is 76. Actor Stephen Lang is 74. Actor Mindy Sterling is 73. Actor Sela Ward is 70. Reggae singer Michael Rose (Black Uhuru) is 69. Singer Peter Murphy (Bauhaus) is 69. Actor Mark Lester is 68. Saxophonist Kirk Whalum is 68. Singer Suzanne Vega is 67. Rock guitarist Richie Sambora (Bon Jovi) is 67. Actor Lisa Rinna is 63. Author Jhumpa Lahiri is 59. Wildlife expert Jeff Corwin is 59. Actor Justin Chambers (TV: "Grey's Anatomy") is 56. Actor Michael Rosenbaum (TV: "Smallville") is 54. Rapper Lil' Kim is 52. Pro Football Hall of Famer Andre Johnson is 45. Pop-jazz singer-musician Peter Cincotti is 43. Actor Serinda Swan is 42. Actor David Henrie is 37. Actor Connor Paolo is 36. R&B/pop singer Alessia Cara is 30.