

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, July 14

Senior Menu: Egg salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, fruit, cookie.

Groton Legion at Milbank, 5:30 p.m., DH.

U10 Baseball (R&B) at Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m., DH, North Complex.

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

Tiger Skills Workouts, GHS Arena, 7:30 a.m.

BB Open Gym, 6 p.m., GHS Arena.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

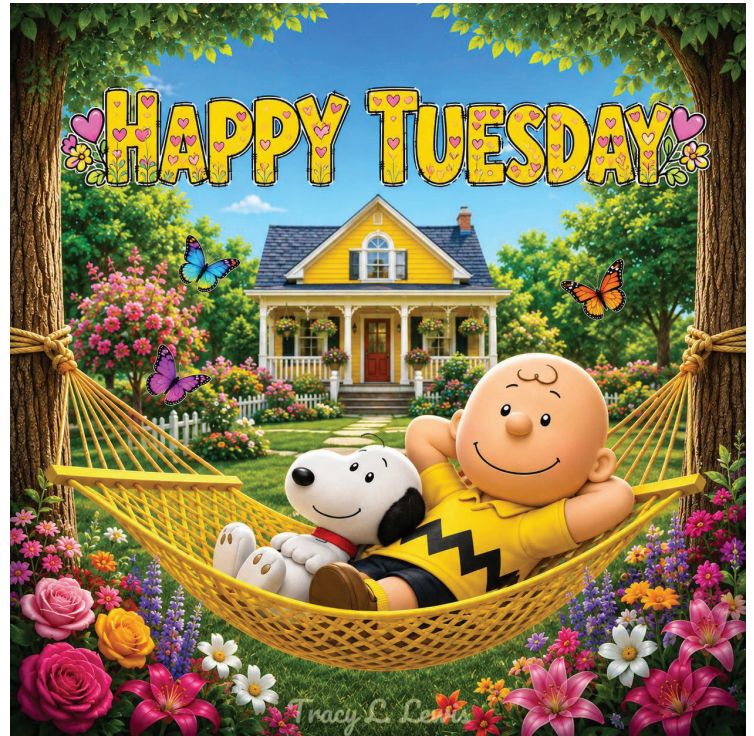
United Methodist: Bible study: Christmas in July!, 10 am.

Ladies Golf 6 p.m

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Wednesday, July 15

Senior Menu: Roasted chicken breast, roasted potatoes, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Groton Legion at Redfield, 5:30 p.m.

Junior Legion at Redfield, 7 p.m.

U10 Baseball at Ipswich, 5:30 p.m., DH.

School Supply Drive, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Groton Community Center.

JVT Practice, 7:30 p.m., GHS Arena.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Men's Golf 3 p.m.

Thursday, July 16

Senior Menu: Cheeseburger casserole, sweet potatoes, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Cancelled: Junior Legion hosts Watertown, 5:30 p.m. (DH).

U14 Tournament in Groton: Game 1: Redfield vs. Groton, 5 p.m.; followed by Clark taking on the winner of Game 1.

Junior/Adult Golf Tournament, 5:30 p.m., Olive Grove Golf Course.

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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.

Japanese Spy Revival

Japan is building its first centralized intelligence agency since World War II as it struggles to combat espionage attempts by China, Russia, and North Korea, a report revealed yesterday. The effort is being supported by agencies in Germany, Australia, and the US.

The country's intelligence program dates back to the late 1800s, when a loose network of spies decoded cables in the 1904-05 war with Russia. In the 1920s and '30s, the country's internal police force—the Tokko—rounded up tens of thousands of political dissidents. After Japan's postwar defeat, the country adopted a pacifist constitution and dismantled its defense and intelligence infrastructure, relying on the US for both.

Japan set aside \$407M for the new agency, which plans to be up and running by December and will be led by Japan's prime minister. Japanese leaders have also begun rebuilding the country's defense infrastructure, allocating a record \$58B this year for defense.

Cosmic Sugar Rush

Scientists have discovered a sugar molecule common in raspberries and self-tanning products inside clouds of dust and gas near the Milky Way's center. The finding suggests some of life's raw ingredients may have formed in space.

Astronomers previously found simpler sugar-like molecules, but erythrulose is the most complex and the first to meet the chemical definition of a true sugar—a molecule with at least three carbon atoms. Scientists identified erythrulose, which has four carbon atoms, by matching its unique radio-wave signature to lab measurements, much like a fingerprint. The technique lets astronomers catalog chemicals without collecting samples.

Sugars are essential to life, serving as an energy source and building blocks for DNA and RNA. Erythrulose isn't used by living organisms but can be converted into important sugars. Researchers estimate millions of tons of erythrulose may have rained onto Earth during the Late Heavy Bombardment roughly 4 billion years ago.

Gus Goes to Auction

One of the largest, most complete Tyrannosaurus rex fossils ever found—known as "Gus"—goes up for auction this morning with a \$19M starting bid. Some experts expect the hammer price to more than double, making Gus one of the most expensive dinosaurs ever sold.

Commercial paleontologists began excavating Gus in 2021 on a private ranch within South Dakota's Hell Creek Formation, where over 95% of T. rex museum specimens have been discovered. Measuring about 12.5 feet tall and 38 feet long, the skeleton suggests Gus was a very large creature that lived roughly 67 million years ago. The paleontologists spent two years hand-digging roughly 7,000 square feet to recover about 61% of Gus' bones—an exceptional amount, since even a 50% recovery rate is considered rare.

The current record for a dinosaur auction belongs to Apex, a stegosaurus sold to billionaire investor Ken Griffin for \$44.6M. The specimen is on loan to New York's American Natural History Museum through late 2028.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Sam Neill, New Zealand screen actor who played paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant in "Jurassic Park," dies at age 78 months after announcing he was cancer-free.

Jordan Walker wins the MLB's Home Run Derby with 12 home run hits; the All-Star Game is tonight at 8 pm ET.

... and the average MLB fastball velocity hits an all-time high for the sixth straight season.

Police investigate death of South Africa soccer player Jayden Adams, weeks after he helped the nation reach its first-ever World Cup knockout stage.

France and Spain meet in the semifinals at 3 pm ET; see results from past matchups.

Science & Technology

Engineers develop paint-on electrodes that could one day power heart monitors, robotic prosthetics, and more wearable health technology—while letting users create designs ranging from sharks to foxes.

Children's brain responses to seeing emotional faces may predict future social life quality; girls with greater amygdala activity were more socially engaged, while the opposite was observed for boys.

Distant exoplanets may harbor water in deep sinks that lie beyond the James Webb Space Telescope's reach, based on new readings of atmospheric data.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq -1.6%) as Wall Street braces for this week's earnings season kickoff.

Twelve states, led by California, sue to block Paramount Skydance's \$111B purchase of Warner Bros. Discovery on antitrust grounds; DOJ approved the merger last month.

President Donald Trump proposes 20% toll on cargo passing through the Strait of Hormuz; the US will also reimpose blockade of Iranian ports near the strait.

Politics & World Affairs

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster (R) appoints late Sen. Lindsey Graham's sister, Darline Graham Nordone, to fill his Senate seat through the end of his term.

ICE agent fatally shoots a 26-year-old Colombian man in Maine; Department of Homeland Security alleges the man was using his vehicle as a weapon.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth creates joint task force with Justice Department to crack down on leaks; announcement comes days after New York Times reporters were subpoenaed over a story about Air Force One.

South Dakota Ends Fiscal Year with \$69 Million Surplus

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Larry Rhoden announced South Dakota closed the state fiscal year 2026 budget with a surplus of \$69 million.

"South Dakota's robust economy is driving steady revenue growth, moving our budget in an even stronger direction," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "We keep our taxes very low and ensure we have the highest return on each dollar invested. We're setting an example for the nation of good stewardship of taxpayer dollars by doing things the right way, the South Dakota way."

The surplus included \$30 million in revenue above estimates. It also includes \$39 million in spending reversions, meaning state agencies spent less than they were budgeted, a sign of strong fiscal responsibility.

Sales tax revenue growth accounted for \$17 million of the surplus, a strong indicator of a growing economy. In FY2026, Sales tax grew 6.6% compared to fiscal year 2025, significantly higher than historical average growth of 4.7%. The largest area of unspent funds came from the Department of Social Services, totaling \$32 million.

"In South Dakota, we adhere to basic principles of financial discipline: we don't spend money we don't have; we balance the budget every year; we avoid debt by saving for one-time investments; and we maintain a fully funded pension system," said BFM Commissioner Jim Terwilliger. "Our strong fiscal year end result is another example of why South Dakota maintains the highest possible credit rating from three independent rating agencies."

Per state law, the \$69 million surplus was transferred to the state reserve funds, which now totals \$325 million, or 12.7%, of the FY2027 budget and will be available for one-time investments in future budget years.

Land for Sale

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

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



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

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion sweeps Sisseton behind Schuster's gem and Borg's walk-off heroics

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion completed a two-game sweep of Sisseton Post 50 Jr. Legion on Monday, using dominant pitching in the opener before rallying for a dramatic walk-off victory in the nightcap.

In the first game, T.C. Schuster was nearly untouchable on the mound, striking out 10 batters while tossing a two-hit shutout in a 4-0 Groton victory. The right-hander worked all five innings, allowing just two hits without issuing a walk.

Groton broke through in the bottom of the third inning. An error plated the game's first run before Kason Oswald delivered a two-run single. John Bisbee followed with an RBI double to cap the four-run inning.

Oswald finished 1-for-2 with a team-high two RBIs, while Schuster and Alex Abeln each collected two hits. Karter Deutsch and Bryson Hanson accounted for Sisseton's two hits. Luke Nielsen took the loss after allowing four runs, three earned, on six hits over three innings.

The second game featured far more drama, as Groton erased a late deficit before Wesley Borg delivered an 11-10 walk-off victory.

Borg's game-winning single in the bottom of the fifth scored the winning run after Groton had battled back to tie the contest at 10-10.

Groton jumped out quickly, taking a 3-0 lead in the first inning as Lincoln Shilhanek drove in two runs with a single. Sisseton answered in the second to tie the game before Groton regained control in the bottom half. Ryder Schelle singled home a run, and another RBI single from Shilhanek helped extend the advantage to 7-3.

Sisseton responded with a seven-run third inning to surge in front 10-7. Owen Anderson, Maddox Rempp, Jack Meyer, Erik Bult, Hank Hanson, Alex Stickland and a Groton error all contributed during the big inning.

Groton refused to go away, scoring twice in the fourth on an error and a Jordan Schwan groundout to even the score before Borg's walk-off hit completed the comeback.

Schelle earned the victory in relief, allowing no hits and two unearned runs over 2 2/3 innings while striking out three. John Bisbee started for Groton, while Anderson was charged with the loss for Sisseton.

Shilhanek paced Groton's offense, going 2-for-3 with three RBIs. Schelle also had two hits, while Borg reached base four times with three walks in addition to his game-winning hit. Groton finished with 10 hits and drew 10 walks while also turning a double play.

Hanson drove in three runs to lead Sisseton, while Rempp, Karter Deutsch, Hanson and Isaiah Deutsch each recorded a hit. Sisseton drew nine walks, with Stickland and Aiden Chanku collecting two apiece, and Isaiah Deutsch added two stolen bases.

The sweep improved Groton's momentum heading into Friday's road matchup against Smitty's B, highlighted by Schuster's dominant shutout performance and Borg's late-game heroics in an exciting comeback victory.



TC Schuster on the mound for the Groton victory over Sisseton in first game. Kason Oswald catching. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 10 - 11 Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion

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	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
SSST	0	3	7	0	0	10	4	3
GRTN	3	4	1	2	1	11	10	4

BATTING

Sisseton Post 5...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
H Hanson #1 (C)	3	0	1	3	1	0
I Deutsch #27 (2B)	3	1	1	0	1	0
A Stickland #3 (SS)	1	1	0	1	2	0
K Deutsch #18 (LF)	3	0	1	0	0	1
O Anderson #13 (P)	2	2	0	1	1	0
M Rempp #4 (1B)	3	1	1	1	0	0
A Chanku #6 (3B)	0	2	0	0	2	0
J Stickland #2 (P)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Meyer #20 (CF)	0	2	0	1	1	0
#6 (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Hamm #5 (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
E Bult #21 (RF)	2	1	0	1	1	0
Totals	20	10	4	8	9	3

TB: H Hanson, K Deutsch, M Rempp, I Deutsch, **CS:** I Deutsch, **HBP:** J Meyer 2, **SB:** O Anderson, I Deutsch 2, **LOB:** 6

PITCHING

Sisseton P...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
O Ande... #13	1.1	5	7	7	5	1	0
M Rempp #4	1.2	3	1	0	2	3	0
J Stickl... #2	1.1	2	3	1	3	0	0
Totals	4.1	10	11	8	10	4	0

L: O Anderson, **P-S:** O Anderson 50-20, M Rempp 46-21, J Stickland 32-14, **WP:** J Stickland, **BF:** O Anderson 13, M Rempp 11, J Stickland 10, **E:** J Meyer 2, #6

Groton Post 39...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (DH)	1	1	0	0	1	0
J Bisbee #15 (P)	2	1	0	0	0	0
J Schwan #11 (3B)	4	1	1	1	0	2
R Schelle #6 (SS)	3	2	2	1	1	0
B Fliehs #19 (RF)	2	2	1	0	2	0
L Shilhan... #17 (1B)	3	0	2	3	0	0
T Schust... #3 (1B)	1	1	1	0	0	0
K Oswald #12 (C)	3	0	1	1	1	2
W Borg #1 (2B)	1	1	1	1	3	0
Z Fliehs #23 (LF)	1	1	0	0	2	0
X Ellenbe... #8 (CF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
Totals	24	11	10	7	10	4

2B: B Fliehs, **TB:** K Oswald, R Schelle 2, X Ellenbecker, L Shilhanek 2, B Fliehs 2, T Schuster, J Schwan, W Borg, **SB:** X Ellenbecker, T Schuster, A Abeln, **LOB:** 8

Groton Pos...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Bisbee #15	2.1	4	8	8	6	0	0
R Schelle #6	2.2	0	2	0	3	3	0
Totals	5.0	4	10	8	9	3	0

W: R Schelle, **P-S:** R Schelle 47-26, J Bisbee 68-30, **HBP:** R Schelle 2, **BF:** R Schelle 15, J Bisbee 16, **E:** J Schwan 2, W Borg 2

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Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion **0 - 4** Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion

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	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
SSST	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
GRTN	0	0	4	0	X	4	8	1

BATTING

Sisseton Post 5...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Nielsen #22 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	2
H Hanson #1 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	1
R Anderson #10 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	1
B Hanson #11 (1B)	2	0	1	0	0	0
J Hamm #5 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
I Deutsch #27 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
K Deutsch #18 (RF)	2	0	1	0	0	1
A Chanku #6 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
J Stickland #2 (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	17	0	2	0	0	10

TB: K Deutsch, B Hanson, **LOB:** 2

PITCHING

Sisseton P...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
L Nielsen #22	3.0	6	4	3	4	5	0
I Deut... #27	1.0	2	0	0	1	1	0
Totals	4.0	8	4	3	5	6	0

L: L Nielsen, **P-S:** L Nielsen 76-42, I Deutsch 23-12, **WP:** L Nielsen, **BF:** L Nielsen 20, I Deutsch 5, **E:** H Hanson 2

Groton Post 39...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (SS)	3	1	2	0	0	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	1	0	0	0	2	1
B Fliehs #19 (3B)	3	1	1	0	0	0
T Schuster #3 (P)	3	1	2	0	0	0
R Schelle #6 (2B)	2	1	1	0	1	1
K Oswald #12 (C)	2	0	1	2	0	1
J Bisbee #15 (LF)	2	0	1	1	0	1
Z Fliehs #23 (RF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
W Borg #1 (RF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
L Shilhan... #17 (1B)	1	0	0	0	1	0
X Ellenbe... #8 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	20	4	8	3	5	6

2B: J Bisbee, **TB:** B Fliehs, R Schelle, T Schuster 2, A Abeln 2, K Oswald, J Bisbee 2, **CS:** J Schwan, **SB:** T Schuster, A Abeln, **LOB:** 9

Groton Pos...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Schust... #3	5.0	2	0	0	0	10	0
Totals	5.0	2	0	0	0	10	0

W: T Schuster, **P-S:** T Schuster 77-52, **BF:** T Schuster 17, **E:** T Schuster

Groton school board reviews budget, lunch prices, more

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area School District board took several steps Monday to prepare for the upcoming school year, approving its annual budget, increasing school lunch and activity admission prices, selecting a construction manager for a major middle/high school renovation project and accepting the resignation of a recently hired English/language arts teacher.

The board received an overview of the 2026-27 budget from the district's new Business Manager Madi Neiber. The budget figures are based on an anticipated enrollment of 549 students for the 2027 fiscal year, a decrease of 14 students from the last school year.

The district is looking to bring in \$2,341,392 from the local property tax levy along with the \$1.1 million opt-out levy, Neiber said. That, along with state aid and utility taxes, make up most of the district's general fund. The main expenses from the general fund are primarily salaries and benefits, followed by operating expenses.

Board member Marty Weismantel pointed out much of that is set by the state.

"Those are set by the state for the general fund," he said. "We don't have anything to do with that. The same for capital outlay. That amount is set by the state. Teacher salaries are set by the state. We just do what we are told to do."

Following the public hearing, the board adopted the 2027 fiscal year budget and authorized Neiber to file the tax levy request with the county auditor.

In other financial actions, the board approved a modest increase to school meal prices and admission fees for athletic events.

Breakfast

- K-5 - \$2.85 (up from \$2.60)
- 6-12 - \$3.35 (up from \$3.10)
- Adult - \$3.75 (up from \$3.50)

Lunch

- K-5 - \$3.85 (up from \$3.60)
- 6-12 - \$4.35 (up from \$4.10)
- Adult - \$5.50 (up from \$5.25)
- Second lunch – K-12 - \$2.00 (No change)
- Second milk – \$0.50 (No change)

Activity admissions

- Adult - \$6 (up from \$5); doubleheader - \$7 (up from \$6)
- Adult 10-punch ticket - \$50 (up from \$45)
- Adult All-Activities Pass - \$75 (no change)
- 1st-12th Grade - \$5 (up from \$4)
- 1st-5th Grade Activity Ticket - \$30 (up from \$25)
- 6th-12th Grade Activity Ticket - \$35 (up from \$30)

Board members also selected the construction manager who will oversee the district's upcoming middle/high school improvement project, a significant step forward as planning continues for the facility upgrades.

The board will vote on a contract in August, but board members indicated wanting to move forward with Hausmann Construction for construction management services. Hausmann will also be able to provide more accurate pricing and a time frame for work proposed in the district's facilities master plan.

The board also accepted the resignation of Kiya Stillman, the recently hired 7-9 grade English/language arts teacher set to replace recently retired teacher Diane Kurtz.

The district now has three open teaching positions, Superintendent Joe Schwan told the board, including a 7th-9th grade ELA teacher, agriculture teacher/FFA advisor and a high school special education teacher position.

Finally, Superintendent Schwan shared more information about a recent change to require non-school

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entities to have liability insurance to utilize school facilities. Essentially, the new requirements are not as all-encompassing as previously thought.

Outside entities that are going to charge an admission fee or host a fundraising effort are the ones required to have liability insurance. The insurance agent said they're not concerned about basketball practices or other events where money is not being exchanged.

- The board held its annual reorganization. Board members Grant Rix and Heather Lerseth-Fliehs took their oaths of office after retaining their seats on the board for another term. Rix was re-elected president of the board, and Nick Strom was re-elected as vice president.

- Superintendent Joe Schwan told the board about new curtains ordered for the theater. New black curtains will replace old brown ones, and the old curtains were declared surplus with no value.

- The board approved contracting with MJ Sinclairs for vehicle fuel after receiving quotes from both MJs and Ken's Fair Food. The quote from Ken's included ethanol at \$3.29, lead-free at \$3.90, E-85 at \$0.9144, No. 2 diesel at \$4.02 and No. 1 diesel at \$4.17. MJs quote included ethanol at \$3.143857, lead-free at \$3.718286, E-85 at \$0.955643, No. 2 diesel at \$3.598286 and No. 1 diesel at \$3.788286.

- The board designated the Groton Independent as the official newspaper for the 2027 fiscal year. That came after the district received three quotes from area newspapers. The Aberdeen Insider quote included classifieds at 25 cents per word with a minimum of \$20 for 10 words; legal notices at \$0.289 per line for the first week and \$0.231 per line for consecutive weeks; and minutes published at \$0.269 per line. The Reporter & Farmer quote included 40 cents per word with a minimum \$8 charge for 20 words, display advertising at \$8.45 per column inch. The Groton Independent quote included 10 cents per word with a minimum charge of \$4.50 for 30 words and \$5 per column inch for display advertising.

★ ★ ★

**FLAGS SHOULD BE AT
HALF MAST**

★

UNTIL 6 P.M. SATURDAY

in honor of the passing of

**SENATOR
LINDSEY GRAHAM**

1955-2025



*Thank you, Senator Graham,
for your service to our country
and to the people of South Carolina.*

★

★ HONORING A LIFE OF SERVICE. REMEMBERING A TRUE PATRIOT. ★



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Governor celebrates surplus as Democratic lawmaker says state missed opportunities to help people

\$69 million remaining from just-ended fiscal year will go into reserve funds for future 'one-time investments'

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

The deposit of a \$69 million budget surplus has grown South Dakota's state government reserve funds to \$325 million, according to an announcement from Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden's office Monday.

The surplus is from the end of the state's 2026 fiscal year on June 30.

"South Dakota's robust economy is driving steady revenue growth, moving our budget in an even stronger direction," Rhoden said, while additionally crediting "good stewardship of taxpayer dollars."

The state collected \$30 million more than its budgeted revenue for the year, \$17 million of which came from higher-than-projected sales tax revenue.

Underspending by state agencies drove the remaining \$39 million of the surplus. That's "a sign of fiscal responsibility," according to Rhoden's office, which said the surplus "will be available for one-time investments in future budget years."

State lawmakers typically distinguish between "one-time" revenue for expenses such as constructing a new building and "ongoing" revenue for expenses such as the day-to-day operations of state government.

Most of the unspent money came from the Department of Social Services, which reverted \$32 million from its \$1.8 billion departmental budget. The department oversees programs such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, among others. About \$654 million of its budget was from state funding sources, with most of the remainder coming from the federal government.

Jim Terwilliger, commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management, declined to explain the details of the department's reversions Monday and said that information will be presented to the Legislature's budget panel, the Joint Appropriations Committee, next week.

Democratic lawmaker questions budget decisions

Budget committee member Rep. Erik Muckey, D-Sioux Falls, is "heartened" by the sales tax revenue



A January 2025 view of the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre. (Photo by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

increase.

"But the message isn't about the surplus," Muckey said. "The message is we've clearly had opportunities to make a difference, and did we leave money on the table to accomplish that?"

He pointed to the Department of Social Services' large reversion, "particularly at a time when addiction and behavioral healthcare are seeing significant needs," and at a time when the state needs funding for programming at a prison under construction in Sioux Falls.

State leaders broke ground on a \$650 million men's prison in the state's largest city earlier this year. It's needed, Muckey said, "but not without accompanying programming in terms of rehabilitation, recidivism and so on."

Muckey has also questioned the Department of Social Services in recent years over its management of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a federal-state program. It's used in South Dakota to assist families with children who need financial support because of the death of a parent, an absent parent, or the unemployment or physical or mental incapacity of a parent. Caregiver participants are required to work, search or train for a job.

Earlier this year, lawmakers partially restored cuts to the program that the department made last year.

"The same question keeps coming up," Muckey said. "Why are we trimming off the edges of programs that are really having an outstanding impact on people in South Dakota and are known for their impact, while we then turn around and say we don't really need this money, we can just send it back?"

There will be new ways in the coming years for lawmakers to hold state agencies accountable for their budgets, Muckey said.

That includes Project BISON, a computer system that's scheduled to come online next summer. Among other updates to state operations, it'll give lawmakers the ability to see deeper into department budgets and understand the management of specific programming.

Higher-than-usual share of budget in reserves

With the addition of the surplus to the state's reserve funds, those reserves now make up 12.7% of the current fiscal year's general fund budget.

Traditionally, about 10% of the budget goes into reserves. In December, Rhoden announced his desire to increase that to 12.5%. Muckey criticized the proposal at the time and renewed the criticism Monday.

He said state officials are "patting ourselves on the back" for the surplus, "when we really could use more of that funding to actually help people and still maintain a very healthy reserve."

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

\$10 million settlement over online gaming child exploitation will fund safety, after-school efforts

South Dakota one of several states to reach agreements with Roblox

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

SIOUX FALLS — Roblox, a gaming platform popular with children, will pay South Dakota nearly \$10 million over four years and implement new protections for young users under a settlement announced Monday by state Attorney General Marty Jackley.

The settlement also requires Roblox to implement age verification. The company plans to use facial age estimation software and government-issued IDs to confirm users' ages.

Jackley said the parameters are necessary as child exploitation cases grow in South Dakota and nationwide, particularly on a platform where adults have allegedly posed as children to communicate with children and lure them into dangerous or criminal activity.

"If someone wants to participate in this, then there needs to be protections there," Jackley said.

The settlement is preventative, he said, since no cases have been filed concerning Roblox and child

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endangerment in South Dakota.

"I hope with this settlement we never have to," Jackley said.

South Dakota is the fifth state to settle with Roblox; combined, the agreements have cost the company about \$54 million. The other settlements are \$12 million with Nevada, \$9 million with Mississippi, \$12.2 million with Alabama and \$11 million with Virginia. Nine other states are suing the company.

Of the settlement funds, \$3.6 million will go to the Attorney General's Office — \$1 million for the state's consumer protection fund and \$2.6 million for the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

The task force responds to tips about potential child exploitation cases, including online offenses and human trafficking investigations like those conducted during the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Jackley said the program is expensive and one of the office's busiest divisions.

"That will relieve a burden that's been building up," Jackley said.

Another \$5 million will go to the state Education Department, with \$1 million earmarked for governmental and nonprofit after-school programs. The remaining funds will be spent at the department's discretion.

Education Secretary Joe Graves spoke at a press conference Monday where state officials announced the settlement.

"The after-school program is exactly where this needs to go because that's the time of the day when kids who are without frequent parental supervision are going home and then they have kind of free rein," Graves said. "After-school programs really kind of address that."

Roblox will spend another \$1 million on educational advertisements about children's online safety for South Dakota families.

In addition to the age verification requirement, the settlement mandates the company make other changes to protect minors, including:

Expanded parental controls allowing caregivers to restrict who users talk to, and restrict the transfer of in-game currency from adults.

Restricted chat features to block adult users from chatting with users under 16 unless they're identified as "trusted friends" on the platform.

Accessible — rather than encrypted — communications involving minors, allowing law enforcement to better track and disband child exploitation networks.

Jackley said he hopes the provisions, especially the reporting requirements and partnership with law enforcement, will serve as a model for other social media and gaming companies to use. The company will release an annual report regarding its child exploitation prevention efforts in South Dakota.

South Dakota could receive an additional \$5.4 million if Roblox fails to meet the settlement's requirements. The terms allow South Dakota to change to "any improved terms" that Roblox and another state might reach later on.

Ultimately, the burden rests on parents and caregivers to educate children about online safety, said Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen.



South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley, right, and Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen participate in a press conference on July 13, 2026, in Sioux Falls. Jackley announced a settlement with the Roblox gaming platform. (Photo by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

"This really starts with having conversations at home, with schools teaching kids responsible online habits and with law enforcement protecting kids from these bad actors," Venhuizen said.

South Dakota is also part of a pending lawsuit against Meta, the parent company of Facebook, over youth mental health and social media addiction.

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.

South Dakota law change lets young rescuer save more wild game bird eggs

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota farmers who run into the nests of pheasants, grouse or prairie chickens in their fields can now call someone to rescue the eggs, thanks to a teenager and a new state law.

Nineteen-year-old Madison Grimm, of Wallace, started Second Chance Flight to rescue viable wild duck eggs from nests destroyed when farmers harvest hay from a field. She hatches and raises the ducklings, and releases them into the wild.

Grimm already held a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit to rescue the eggs of migratory waterfowl. But state law prevented her from doing the same work with eggs from birds such as pheasants.

"I decided I really needed to get this law changed because there was a huge problem last year," Grimm said.

Grimm's father Adam, a nationally recognized wildlife artist and three-time winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest, traveled with his daughter to Pierre to testify for her bill.

The new law lets federal permit holders expand their work to other kinds of birds. Gov. Larry Rhoden signed the bill in March, and it took effect July 1.

Grimm had her own private waterfowl aviary prior to Second Chance Flight, with over 100 birds from 21 species. It was originally built as a hobby and a source of reference material for her wildlife paintings. Madison is the only artist to ever win the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Junior Duck Stamp Contest three times.

Farmers visiting the aviary knew she owned incubators. So when their farm equipment struck nests, they began asking whether she could save the surviving eggs.

At first, Grimm had to decline because she lacked the necessary federal permit.

"It kind of broke my heart," she said. "I didn't know this was happening, and there's apparently nothing anyone can do about it."

Some farmers told her they could encounter 20 or 30 nests in a single field they are haying, particularly



Nineteen-year-old Madison Grimm, of Wallace, South Dakota, tends to ducklings at Second Chance Flight. (Courtesy of Madison Grimm)

near waterbodies. The machinery may kill the hen and crush some eggs, but other eggs often remain intact and viable.

After researching a similar program in another state, Grimm secured a federal permit and founded Second Chance Flight.

When farmers strike a nest, they contact her, and she or a volunteer retrieves the eggs. She shines a light through to check the embryo's development, disinfects cracks, and seals the shell with clear nail polish to block bacteria.

Grimm had accepted over 450 eggs as of late June, and nearly 700 since the program launched. She estimates that about 98% of the viable eggs placed in her incubators hatch. She raises the ducklings for six to eight weeks and releases them in groups on wetlands. She releases them shortly before they can fly, so they remain together as they adjust to the wild.

Grimm has also applied for federal permission to place leg bands on released birds. That would help her learn whether the birds survive.

Farmers have welcomed the program, she said. They have to cut hay to feed livestock, but many feel terrible when a hen is caught up in the machinery and disappears in a burst of feathers.

"And they know she's got a whole nest right there," Grimm said.

She hopes to eventually expand Second Chance Flight across the Prairie Pothole Region — an expanse of ponds and wetlands crucial for millions of migratory birds — and train others to conduct rescues.

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.

Judge blasts Trump for using the presidency to 'manipulate' courts in IRS case

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump "acted in bad faith" when he swiftly dropped his tax return lawsuit and directed his Cabinet members to establish a \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund, a federal judge in Florida ruled Monday.

Federal Judge Kathleen Williams of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida excoriated Trump, his sons Eric and Don Trump Jr., and their private Trump Organization for using the presidency to "manipulate the judicial process to pursue benefits unavailable in litigation."

The Trumps and their private company voluntarily dropped a \$10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service in May in exchange for the departments of Justice and Treasury creating a \$1.776 billion



President Donald Trump attends a bilateral meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on the sidelines of the G7 Summit on June 17, 2026 in Evian-les-Bains, France.

(Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

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fund for alleged "victims of lawfare."

Critics pounced on the settlement as a "slush fund" for "cop beaters," referring to Jan. 6 defendants who assaulted police officers. Trump pardoned all Jan. 6 rioters on the first day of his second term.

The Department of Justice maintained the fund was open to victims of any political leanings.

Williams, appointed during President Barack Obama's first term, noted in her order the pot of settlement money was created to "fund claims premised on events including those arising from, inter alia, the Mar-a-Lago Documents Case and the events of January 6, 2021."

The settlement agreement, signed May 18 by Associate Attorney General Stanley Woodward and IRS Chief Executive Officer Frank Bisignano, also forever absolved Trump, his sons and the Trump Organization from government prosecution and tax enforcement.

"No sitting President has ever sued federal agencies completely subject to his control for monetary benefits, or any benefits that inure to him, his family, and associates. The failure of any attorney in this case to address, on this docket, the relationship of this Article II proscription with the benefits conferred by the 'settlement' is a glaring omission that speaks to the control of the Lead Plaintiff," Williams wrote in the 56-page order.

Lawyers, Trump and family cited

Williams referred Trump's attorney Alejandro Brito to the Florida Bar for review of possible disciplinary action, and will prohibit for at least one year applications to the Southern District of Florida by Trump's other attorney, Daniel Z. Epstein.

Trump, his sons and the Trump Organization are "prohibited from referring to the purported 'settlement agreement,' or using, offering, admitting, or citing any of its provisions in any judicial, administrative, regulatory, arbitration, or any other official proceeding as evidence of a 'settlement' reached in this matter," Williams wrote.

Further, she ordered the Trumps and their company to reimburse fees for attorneys appointed by the court to examine Trump's case against the IRS, an agency under his control as president.

35 former judges

The president and his family sued the IRS in January over the late 2019 leak of their tax information to news media by a government contractor. The contractor had already been sentenced for the leak in early 2024.

The creation of the "anti-weaponization" fund sparked lawsuits, including from two former police officers who deployed to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Trump's IRS case was revived in late May when 35 former federal judges intervened, arguing the settlement fund was "a product of collusion and is itself a fraud on the Court."

Lawyers representing the former federal judges hailed Williams' ruling.

"The court's opinion is a resounding victory for the rule of law. We are proud to represent these former judges in presenting the arguments that the court adopted," according to a statement from Norm Eisen, co-founder and board member of Democracy Defenders Action, Matt Platkin, founding partner of Platkin LLP, and Susman Godfrey.

The Trumps and their private business maintained the president sued the IRS in his personal capacity and that the court lacked authority to review the settlement.

In her order Monday, Williams said the court declined to "accept the credulous exercise of divorcing President Trump's current job title from an understanding of what happened here."

Promise to scrap fund

Outrage over the fund, including from members of Trump's own party, delayed the Senate's eventual passage of a bill to fund Trump's mass deportation agenda for the rest of his term.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche testified to Congress on June 2 that the administration would scrap the fund.

The White House referred States Newsroom to the president's personal attorneys for comment.

A spokesperson for Trump's legal team said in a statement, "The IRS wrongly allowed a rogue, politically-

motivated employee to leak private and confidential information about President Trump, his family, and the Trump Organization to the New York Times, ProPublica and other left-wing news outlets, which was then illegally released to millions of people. President Trump continues to hold those who wrong America and Americans accountable.”

A spokesperson for the Department of Justice provided States Newsroom with a written statement.

“There was no collusion in this case, and the partisan judge who speculated otherwise has disregarded decades of precedent. This case was brought by President Trump in his personal capacity, as well as by several members of his family, who were all victims of admitted violations of law. There was a live dispute because the plaintiffs sought relief that the government had not provided. The plaintiffs did not receive any money and were barred from receiving any from the now-defunct Anti-Weaponization Fund,” according to the spokesperson.

The Treasury Department did not respond to a request for comment.

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

After US Sen Lindsey Graham's death, Trump recommends Graham's sister to fill out term

BY JENNIFER SHUT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced Monday he would like the South Carolina governor to select the late U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham's sister to fill the Republican's seat for the remainder of his term.

“I recommended, to Governor Henry McMaster, Lindsey Graham's wonderful sister, Darline, to serve as interim Senator from the Great State of South Carolina,” Trump wrote in a social media post. “This would be a fabulous tribute to Lindsey, who loved her dearly!”

McMaster is scheduled to announce his appointment to the Senate at 4 p.m. Eastern during a press conference. The person selected for the role would serve out the remainder of Graham's term through early January. Graham was close to his sister, Darline Graham Nordone, after their parents died when she was a teen.

South Carolina Republican Sen. Tim Scott backed the suggestion, writing on social media that Nordone “would be a fantastic pick to serve out the remainder of the senate term.”

“After speaking with Darline, there is no one better who understands Lindsey's love for family, our state, and our country,” Scott wrote.



The late Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., right, at the time a candidate for president, rides on the back of a golf cart with his sister Darline Graham Nordone, center, during the Iowa State Fair on Aug. 17, 2015 in Des Moines, Iowa. (Photo

by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

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Graham, 71, died unexpectedly this weekend of an aortic dissection due to arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease, according to preliminary findings from the District of Columbia's medical examiner that were shared by Graham's office.

Graham's death has also triggered a special election process in his home state to determine who will advance to the November general election for a full six-year Senate term.

Graham won the Republican primary in June and was set to face Democratic candidate Annie Andrews later this year.

The special election to determine which Republican will advance is scheduled for Aug. 11, with a runoff taking place on Aug. 25 if necessary.

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

Housing bill becomes law without Trump's signature

BY JACOB FISCHLER

President Donald Trump said Friday morning he would not sign federal legislation aimed at lowering the cost of housing, but the bipartisan package became law at 12:01 a.m. Saturday anyway.

In a post to his social media site, Trump again said that as a protest against Congress not passing an elections bill known as the SAVE America Act he considers a top priority, he would not sign the housing bill that both chambers of Congress passed with wide margins.

If the president does not sign or veto a bill passed by Congress, it becomes law in 10 days, excluding Sundays, after it reaches the White House. The constitutional provision does not apply if Congress is adjourned, resulting in what is called a pocket veto, but the current July Fourth recess does not count as an adjournment, experts agree.

The housing package, known as the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, overhauls several areas of housing policy in an effort to make it easier for builders to construct new units and potential buyers to secure federally backed loans.

Trump in his post targeted the SAVE America Act.

"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, which is polling at 97% with the Republican Party, and very high with the non-politician Democrats," Trump wrote, overstating the bill's level of support.

Liked, but not universally

Public polling on the SAVE America Act, which would impose photo ID requirements for voters and limit mail-in voting, among other provisions depending on the version of the bill, is scant. But surveys that are



President Donald Trump speaks during a rally at Mount Rushmore National Memorial on July 3, 2026 in Keystone, South Dakota. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

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available show the bill, while generally popular, is much more divisive than Trump represented.

A May Politico survey showed that, when pollsters did not describe the bill's provisions, more voters supported than opposed the bill, 37% to 21%, but that a 42% plurality of voters had no opinion. Even among the sample of respondents who voted for Trump in 2024, only 62% said they supported it.

Asked about particular elements of the bill, the most popular in the Politico poll was a requirement to show proof of citizenship to register to vote, with 52% of respondents saying they supported it compared to only 18% who opposed.

In the U.S. Senate, Democrats are universally opposed to the bill. And not enough Republicans support abolishing the chamber's legislative filibuster, which would allow the chamber's majority Republicans to pass bills along party lines.

Consensus housing measure

The housing legislation, on the other hand, registered barely any opposition.

The measure passed 85-5 in the Senate and 358-32 in the House. Many of the no votes in the House came from a group of conservatives who took Trump's cue and opposed the package not on its merits but as a protest of the Senate's inaction on the elections bill.

The housing overhaul packages together many earlier proposals sought by various interests involved in housing policy. It would reduce some regulatory hurdles to home construction and expand the possible uses of federal housing funds.

The bill would also allow money from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program to be used for construction of affordable housing.

It would in addition tie the amount some cities and states receive from the \$3.3 billion grant program to their rates of affordable housing construction and expand the eligibility for some federally backed low-income mortgage programs.

The White House initially said Trump supported the bill, and scheduled an unusually prominent signing ceremony at the U.S. Capitol in late June.

But the president changed course just hours before he was scheduled to sign the bill and canceled the event. He has since dismissed the housing measure as unimportant compared to the SAVE America Act.

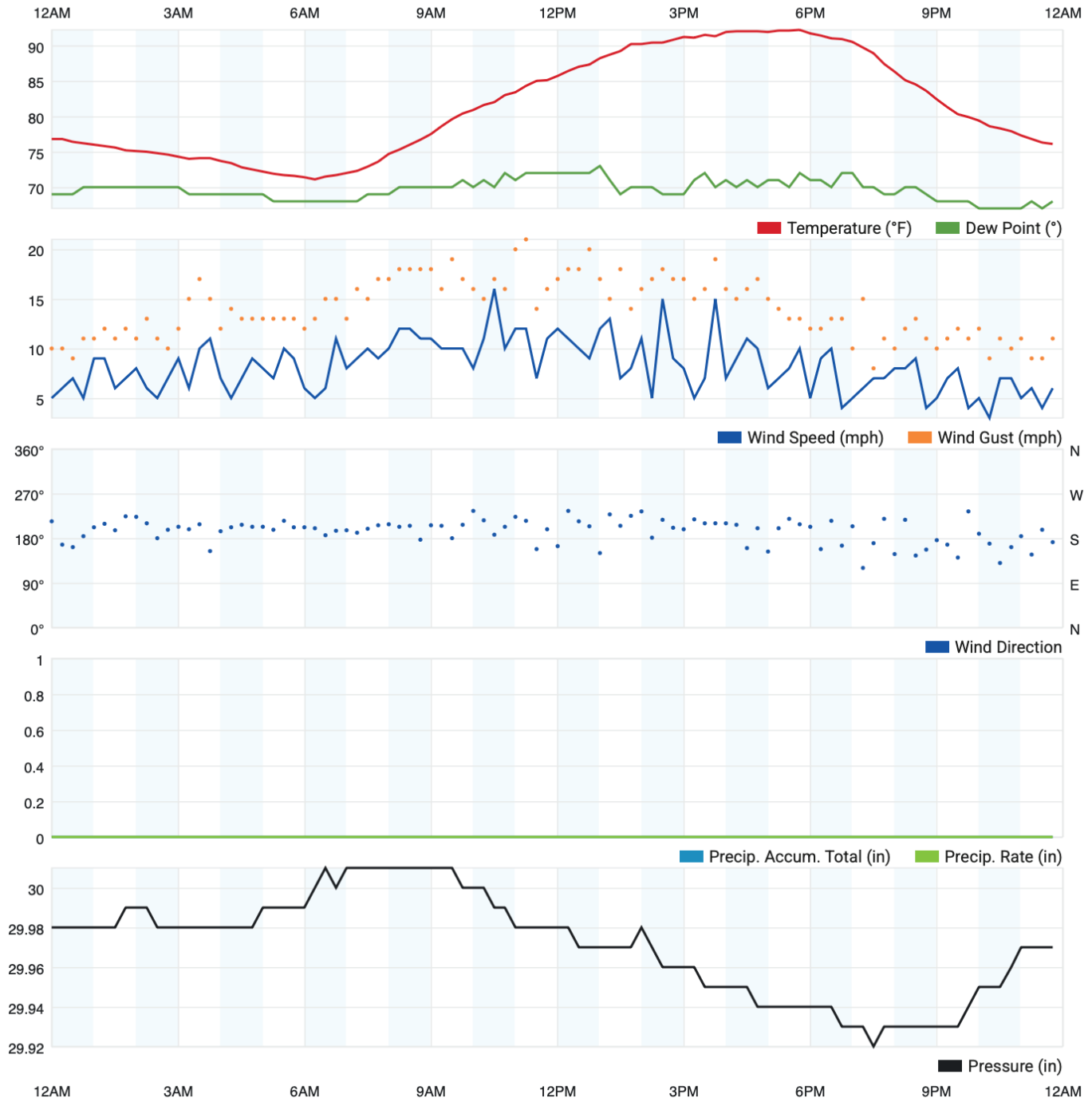
Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

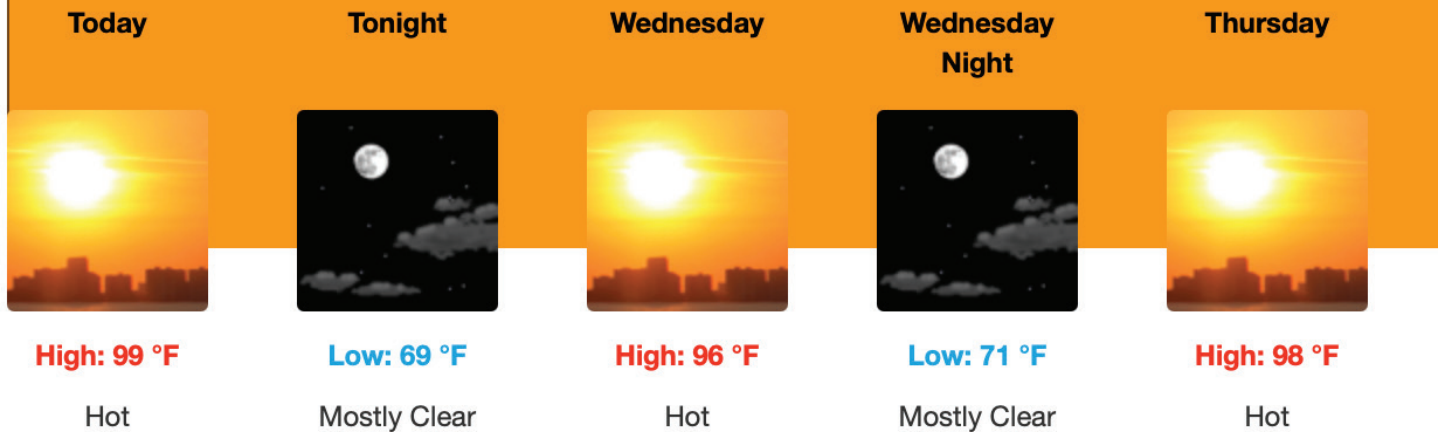
July 13, 2026



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Heat Advisory



Long Duration Heatwave

July 14, 2026
2:53 AM

Peak Heat Expected through Thursday

Key Messages

- Temperatures and humidity remaining consistent through the middle of the week.
 - ◆ **Hottest stretch of days will be through Thursday!**
- 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						
	7/14	7/15	7/16	7/17	7/18	7/19
	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Aberdeen	98	100	103	96	97	93
Britton	96	95	97	91	90	88
Clark	94	94	95	91	91	88
Eagle Butte	100	99	100	98	96	94
Eureka	99	99	100	94	94	90
Gettysburg	98	99	101	98	96	93
Kennebec	99	99	102	101	99	95
McIntosh	100	99	97	94	93	91
Milbank	96	96	97	92	89	88
Miller	97	97	99	97	95	93
Mobridge	101	101	102	98	98	93
Murdo	98	97	100	99	97	94
Pierre	103	102	104	101	99	97
Redfield	99	99	101	99	97	95
Sisseton	96	95	97	92	89	88
Watertown	95	95	97	92	91	88
Webster	94	93	95	89	88	86
Wheaton	95	94	96	91	88	87

Maximum Heat Index (°F)

Forecast						
	7/14	7/15	7/16	7/17	7/18	7/19
	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Aberdeen	98	99	103	96	96	91
Britton	98	95	97	92	89	86
Clark	93	93	94	92	90	86
Eagle Butte	98	96	99	96	94	92
Eureka	98	96	98	93	92	88
Gettysburg	96	96	99	97	94	91
Kennebec	97	97	100	100	97	93
McIntosh	99	96	96	92	91	89
Milbank	98	97	98	94	89	87
Miller	96	95	98	97	93	91
Mobridge	100	99	101	97	96	91
Murdo	96	94	98	97	95	92
Pierre	101	100	103	100	97	95
Redfield	98	97	100	98	95	93
Sisseton	99	96	98	94	89	87
Watertown	96	96	97	94	91	87
Webster	94	93	95	90	88	85
Wheaton	97	97	98	92	88	86

Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)

Maximum Heat Index Forecast (°F)



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

Dangerously hot temperatures will continue for the next several days. High temperatures will top out in the mid 90s to low 100s with heat index values in the upper 90s to low 100s through the end of the week. This will lead to widespread heat related impacts, especially for those without adequate cooling and those sensitive to heat.

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Long Duration Heatwave Headlines

July 14, 2026
2:53 AM

→ **Heat Advisory**- Central and portions of northeastern SD and west central MN.

→ **Valid: through Thursday evening CDT.**

Heat Exhaustion

ACT FAST

- Move to a cooler area
- Loosen clothing
- Sip cool water
- Seek medical help if symptoms don't improve

Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.

Dizziness
Thirst
Heavy Sweating
Nausea
Weakness



Heat Stroke

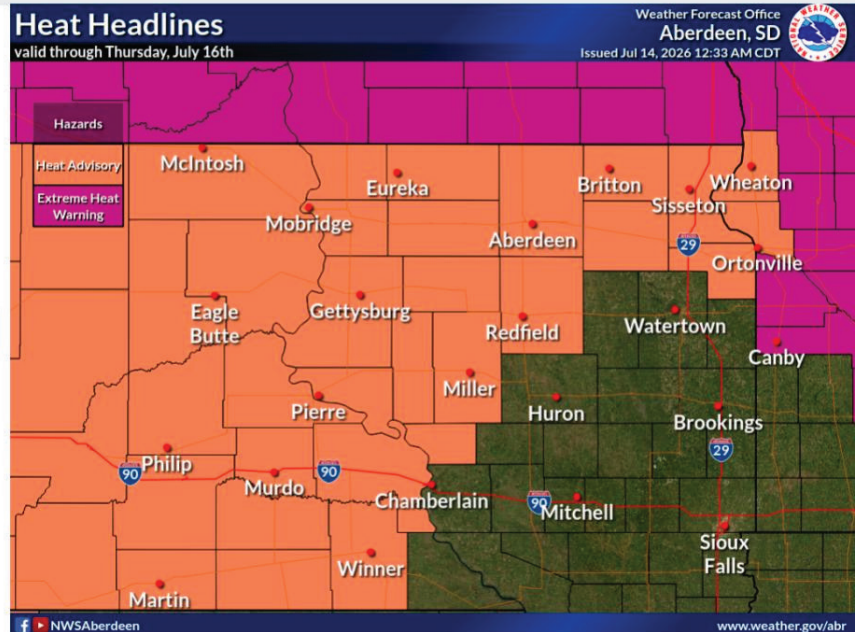
ACT FAST

CALL 911

- Move person to a cooler area
- Loosen clothing and remove extra layers
- Cool with water or ice

Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.

Stay Cool, Stay Hydrated, Stay Informed!



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Heat Advisory is now in effect for all of central SD and portions of northeast SD and west central MN until 10 PM CDT/9 PM MDT Thursday. Prolonged dangerously hot temperatures and high humidity may lead to heat illnesses.



Maximum HeatRisk

July 14, 2026
2:53 AM CDT

Key Messages

- Maximum HeatRisk is expected to be **Major** 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

	7/14 Tue	7/15 Wed	7/16 Thu	7/17 Fri	7/18 Sat	7/19 Sun
Aberdeen	3	3	3	3	3	2
Britton	3	3	3	3	2	2
Clark	3	3	3	3	2	2
Eagle Butte	3	3	3	3	2	2
Eureka	4	4	4	4	3	2
Gettysburg	3	3	3	3	3	2
Kennebec	2	2	2	2	2	2
McIntosh	4	4	4	2	2	2
Milbank	3	4	4	4	2	2
Miller	3	3	3	3	3	2
Mobridge	4	4	4	4	3	3
Murdo	2	2	3	3	3	2
Pierre	3	3	3	3	2	2
Redfield	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sisseton	3	4	4	4	2	2
Watertown	3	3	3	3	3	2
Webster	3	3	3	3	2	2
Wheaton	3	3	3	3	2	2



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 92 °F at 4:23 PM

Low Temp: 71 °F at 6:17 AM

Wind: 22 mph at 11:14 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1931

Record Low: 42 in 1967

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.59

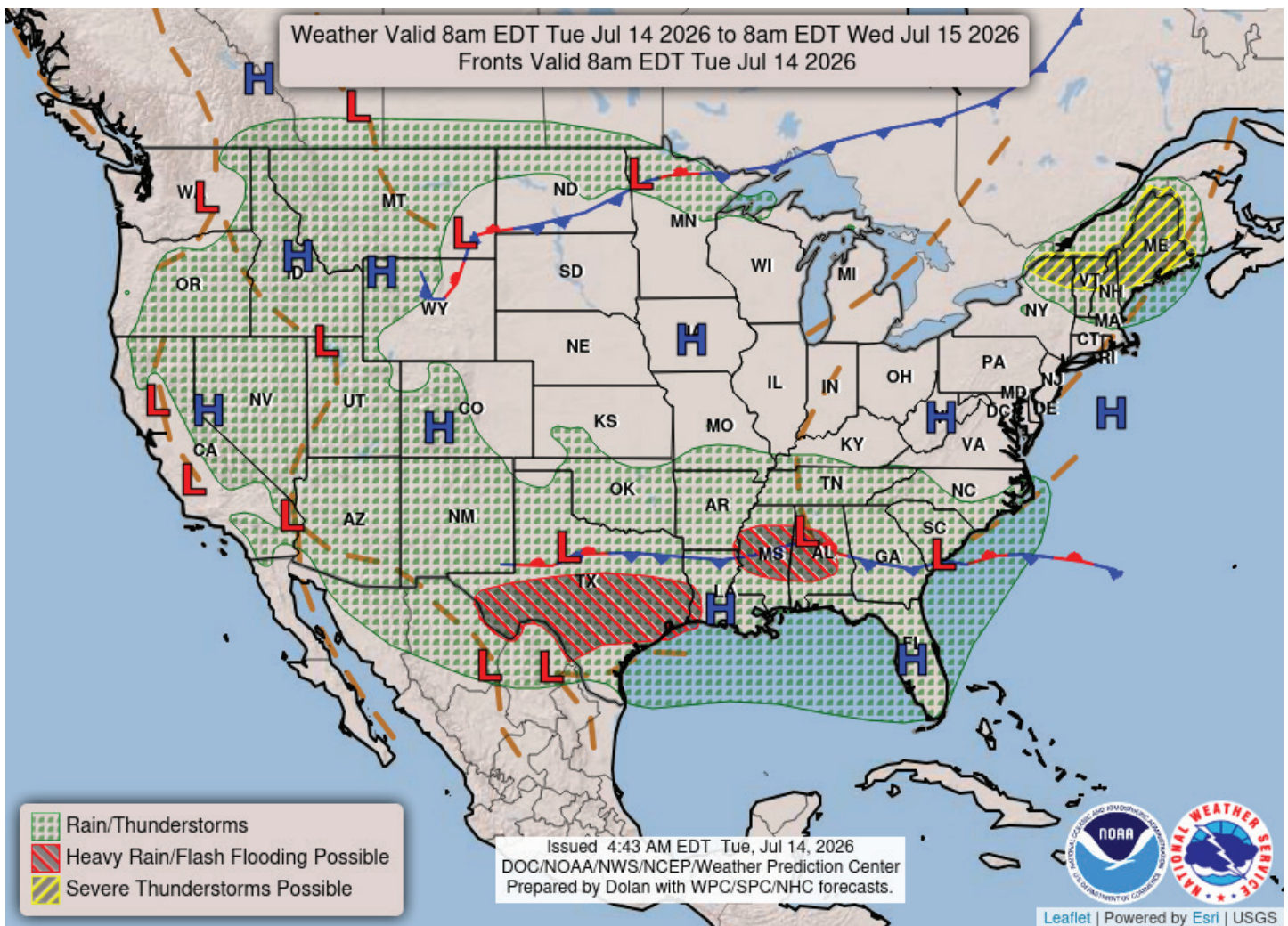
Precip to date in July.: 4.72

Average Precip to date: 12.60

Precip Year to Date: 14.19

Sunset Tonight: 9:18 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58 am



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Today in Weather History

July 14, 1970: A line of severe thunderstorms raced across southeast South Dakota into northwest Iowa causing extensive damage. The line of storms produced widespread high winds and large hail. The hail averaged quarter to hen egg size although some areas received stones the size of softballs and winds over 70 mph were not uncommon. The most extensive damage from the storms extended from Mitchell through Parker to near Beresford. Spotty areas reported 100% crop damage. In Lincoln County, the hail caused an estimated \$8 million in crop damage and \$2 million in property damage. In the town of Marion, the hail was so large that it punched holes in some roofs.

July 14, 2009: A line of storms moving across north-central South Dakota during the early morning hours on the 14th became heavy rainfall producing thunderstorms for northeastern South Dakota. Rainfall amounts of 2 to 5 inches caused mainly localized flooding. However in Grant County, a 20 foot wide by a 17-foot deep culvert on 468th Avenue in Twin Brooks was washed away by flash flooding. The Grant County Highway Department said fixing the channel would cost more than \$40,000.

1936 — Extreme heat prevailed across the central U.S. as severe drought raged from Texas to the Dakotas. Record high temperatures were established in sixteen states that summer, including readings as high as 120 degrees in the Great Plains Region. On this particular date, afternoon highs for 113 stations across the state of Iowa averaged 108.7 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1957 — Hail, with some stones up to an inch in diameter, covered the ground to a depth of three inches ruining crops in the Bath area of New Hampshire. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Severe thunderstorms in Iowa produced eight inches of golf ball size hail near Grafton, IA, completely stripping corn stalks in the area. Hail caused more than a million dollars damage to crops in Worth County and Mitchell County, and another million dollars damage in Ada County and Crawford County. Unseasonably cool weather prevailed in the Great Plains Region. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 37 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Severe thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the Northern Atlantic Coast Region during the afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms also spawned a rather strong tornado near Westtown, NY, and drenched Agawam, MA, with four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern New Mexico to central Nebraska. One hundred soldiers were injured by flying debris and collapsing tents during a thunderstorm near Trinidad, CO. Thunderstorms in Colorado produced wind gusts to 77 mph at La Junta. Early morning thunderstorms produced torrential rains over parts of Louisiana, with 7.50 inches at Carencro, and 5.85 inches at Morgan City. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1995: On the evening of Friday, July 14th, thunderstorms producing severe weather were occurring over Upper Michigan and adjacent portions of Ontario near Sault Saint Marie. By late evening the storms had evolved into a bowing line just northwest of the Mackinac Bridge. At 10:17 PM EDT, the thunderstorm gust front hit the bridge, and a gust to 90 mph was measured. Sustained winds of 80 mph continued on the bridge for ten more minutes. Thus began the intense "Ontario-Adirondacks Derecho" that would cause hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of damage, several deaths, and many injuries as it raced southeast from the northern Great Lakes to the Atlantic coast.

2005 — Death Valley had 7 consecutive days (July 14-20) with high temperatures equal to or above 125 degrees.

2006: Tropical Storm Bilis tracks across northern Taiwan before making landfall in southeastern China's Fujian province with maximum sustained winds near 65 mph. The storm causes at least 575 deaths in Fujian, Guangdong, and Hunan provinces and direct economic losses near \$3.3 billion.



The Outcome of Discouragement

How we respond to disappointment shapes how we experience God's faithfulness.

Psalms 40:1-3: 1 I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.

3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.

Discouragement is a common problem. As we saw yesterday, it may start with a divided mind but can easily turn into blaming others and giving way to anger. Sadly, its effects don't stop there.

When disappointments pile up without resolution, our relationships suffer. If we see the one who disappointed us as the source of all our troubles, we may distance ourselves or even end the relationship altogether. Unresolved disappointment can also damage our sense of self-worth over time.

The most serious consequence is spiritual drift (Hebrews 2:1). When discouragement takes hold, the Lord can seem distant or uncaring, not because He's withdrawn but because we've built walls around ourselves. Then things that were once cornerstones of our faith—worship, Bible study, prayer—can easily fall by the wayside.

Don't allow disappointments to build up and take such a toll on your life. Psalm 40:2 offers a beautiful reminder that the heavenly Father can lift you out of difficult places and set your feet on solid ground. When you're feeling discouraged, turn to the Lord—He is the one who can put a new song in your mouth, a song of praise to Him (v. 3). Let your struggle become an opportunity to experience His faithfulness in a deeper way.

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:

07.13.26

19 36 38 43 48 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 32 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.10.26

2 39 44 46 56 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$637,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 17 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.13.26

6 7 24 29 51 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$33,770,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 32 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.11.26

1 2 10 18 20

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$183,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 47 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.13.26

1 17 31 39 43 22

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.13.26

5 25 36 40 48 3

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$498,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Abortion rights are on the ballot in 4 states. Here's what to know

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Idaho voters will decide whether to roll back the state's abortion ban, the secretary of state told the group behind the initiative in a letter Monday, joining three other states where abortion will be directly on the ballot on Nov. 3.

Voters in Virginia and Nevada — both states where abortion is already legal through at least 24 weeks of pregnancy — are considering state constitutional amendments to create a right to abortion.

And in Missouri, which in 2024 became the first state to use a constitutional amendment to undo an abortion ban, voters are being asked to override that to bring back an abortion ban, with limited exceptions, and to write into the state constitution a ban on some gender-affirming care for minors.

Here's a look at the situation.

One of the most conservative states could undo its ban

The measure put on Idaho's ballot through a volunteer-run petition drive would create a law, not an amendment to the state constitution.

Idahoans United for Women and Families, which is leading the campaign, shared with The Associated Press a letter from state election officials Monday verifying that it has qualified for the ballot.

It would allow abortion until fetal viability, which is generally considered to be somewhere past 21 weeks into a pregnancy, though there's no fixed time frame. The change would make the state's law similar to what it was before the Supreme Court's 2022 ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade and allowed states to ban abortion.

Idaho now is one of six states where an abortion ban at all stages of pregnancy does not include exceptions for the health of the girl or woman. Like most other bans, it does allow abortion to save the life of the woman or in pregnancies caused by rape or incest.

It also became the first state, in 2023, to make it a crime to help a minor obtain an abortion without the consent of their parents. Despite a court challenge, most parts of that law have remained intact.

David Ripley, the CEO of the anti-abortion group Idaho Chooses Life, is preparing to campaign against the measure.

"This is going to have a profound impact on Idaho," he said, "and will basically invalidate virtually every pro-life law that the legislature has enacted over the last 30 to 40 years."

Missouri is considering a turnabout

Whichever way the ballot measure vote goes in Missouri, it's already a state with several firsts after Roe was overturned.

It was the first state to begin enforcing a ban on abortion throughout pregnancy. And in 2024, it became the first state to use a ballot measure to roll back a ban. Even after that, though, abortion access was deeply limited by state regulations until a court ruling in June blocked enforcement of many of them.

In the state, where Republicans dominate the government, there have been legal battles surrounding the language of the constitutional amendment. The one before voters, unlike the previous ban, would allow exceptions in the cases of medical emergencies and fetal anomalies. Like the earlier one, there would be exceptions for pregnancies caused by rape or incest.

Two states are considering amendments to preserve the right to abortion

Both Nevada and Virginia currently allow abortion through at least 24 weeks of pregnancy. That means amendments to preserve the right to an abortion would likely not have a major impact on access to abortion in either state.

The amendments could be factors, however, in driving voter turnout in states where both Democrats and Republicans have prevailed in statewide elections in the last five years.

Nevada voters already approved the amendment in 2024 by a nearly 2 to 1 margin. But the state con-

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stitution calls for amendments to pass in public votes twice before they take effect.

The measures could be a test for abortion-rights groups

Some groups want to see state laws that go further than Roe v. Wade did and lift restrictions on abortions throughout pregnancy.

In June, the National Abortion Federation, an organization of abortion providers, opposed "rigid legal cutoffs that ban or restrict abortion care at viability or arbitrary gestational lines." The organization does not raise money for political campaigns, but its positions may indicate what some other groups are thinking.

In 2024, a South Dakota measure called for banning abortions during the third trimester and allowing some restrictions in the second trimester, while protecting the right to them in the first trimester. Voters rejected it.

Most national abortion-rights groups did not support it either. Since Roe was overturned, abortion rights advocates have lost four statewide votes on reproductive rights. Their side has prevailed in 14 referendums over the same period.

Melanie Folwell, executive director of Idahoans United for Women and Families, says national groups that sit out these votes are thinking narrowly.

"I would encourage them to get out of their bubbles of activism and actually begin to engage with the public on where folks are at," she said.

Death toll from a Bangkok music bar fire rises to 30, dozens remain in hospital

BANGKOK (AP) — The death toll from a huge fire in a Bangkok music bar has increased to 30, officials said Tuesday.

More than 70 people were injured, with 24 of them still in critical condition, according to a statement by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

The blaze at the Rong Beer Na Ladprao bar, the city's deadliest in 17 years, broke out late Sunday in a northern part of the Thai capital. Firefighters needed half an hour to bring it under control.

The bar, which in Thai calls itself a brewery or beer hall, claimed to accommodate as many as 600 customers. It was not clear how many were present Sunday night.

An investigation into the cause of the fire and whether the bar was following safety regulations is ongoing. Most of the people who were killed were found trapped in windowless bathrooms where they may have sought to escape the flames, police said.

Bangkok Gov. Chadchart Sittipunt said Tuesday he has ordered the city's administration to conduct a sweeping survey of such establishments to assess risks. The city will also step up enforcement of existing laws to improve safety standards, he said.

Former patrons of the bar and other mourners visited the site Tuesday, adding to the growing pile of flowers leaning on the guardrails cordoning off the location of the blaze.

Handwritten messages in Thai and other languages, including Korean, were left alongside white flowers, expressing condolences to the victims.

Debris from the bar — like melted musical instruments and blackened chairs — lay scattered along the sidewalk, moved there Monday by Thai officials investigating the cause of the fire.

University student Thanakon Phoklang said he was passing by and wanted to pay his respects, calling the loss regrettable.

On Monday, the president of the Thailand Structural Engineers Association, Amorn Pimanmas, told reporters outside the bar that, while he had not inspected the venue, he observed some risk factors that could worsen fire hazards.

He said the building is enclosed, has low ceilings and may have used foam as decorative materials, without adequate flame-retardant treatment. Combined with limited air ventilation, smoke would accumulate

quickly, he said, creating toxic air that could be the main cause of death for many victims.

He also noted that officials said the bar was licensed as a restaurant with a live music venue rather than an entertainment venue because it was located outside the designated zoning for such businesses. Amorn said that would exclude it from the stricter fire safety requirements for entertainment venues.

"There must be some kind of revolution regarding fire safety procedures, and I think law enforcement is also very important," he said. "It's not that we don't have the law, but it's the problem of how the law could be strictly enforced from now on. I think the government should answer this question."

China's June exports surge 27% from a year earlier as AI boom drives strong demand

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China's exports accelerated in June, jumping 27% from a year earlier thanks partly to the boom in artificial intelligence, the customs agency said Tuesday.

The increase in exports in June was much better than economists had expected. Exports rose 19.4% year-on-year in May.

Imports in June surged 36%, better than May's 27.4% year-on-year growth, with analysts attributing the expansion in part due to the Iran war driving up import costs.

China recorded a trade surplus of \$125.6 billion in June, widening from \$105.4 billion in the previous month.

"With the rapid growth of AI, our imports and export of products in this field are robust," Wang Jun, vice minister of China's General Administration of Customs, said at a news conference in Beijing.

He said trade in electronic components, computer spare parts, and other computing hardware jumped nearly 57% to 5.1 trillion yuan (\$760 billion) in the first half of the year. Other products such as AI glasses, AI translating devices, powered exoskeletons and other smart products are also evolving.

"Trade values took another big leg up in June," Julian Evans-Pritchard, head of China Economics at Capital Economics, wrote in a note Tuesday. "This predominantly reflects the recent surge in semiconductor prices on the back of the AI boom. But even putting that aside, foreign demand for Chinese goods remains robust."

China's exports of vehicles, especially EVs, and other tech-related products have boomed as rapid adoption of AI increases the need for semiconductors and other electronic equipment.

The strength in export manufacturing has helped to offset prolonged weakness in domestic spending and investment due to a prolonged downturn in the property industry.

In January-June, China's exports climbed 17.6% from a year earlier, while imports jumped 26.6%, according to the customs data.

Policymakers including those in the U.S. and in Europe have express alarm over rising trade deficits with China. In order to bypass barriers such as higher tariffs, Chinese businesses have been moving factories to regions like Europe. China has also been exporting more to Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Wang, the customs official, acknowledged the threat from rising trade barriers.

"We still face serious risks and challenges in the second half of the year," he said.

While China's export growth is likely to continue, it is becoming increasingly fragile, said Wei Li, head of Multi-Asset Investments at BNP Paribas Securities (China). Robust shipments in autos and AI-related items will remain dependent on global demand and regulatory barriers, he said.

Exports to Southeast Asia in June surged nearly 35% from a year ago, while those to the European Union and Latin America increased more than 18% and 28%, respectively.

Exports to the United States climbed almost 14% from a year earlier. China's shipments to the U.S. have risen in recent months, partly due to declines in shipments a year earlier after President Donald Trump returned to office last year and implemented higher tariffs.

China is set to announce its economic growth data for the April-June quarter on Wednesday. Chinese leaders have set an annual growth target of 4.5% to 5% for this year, slightly lower than the 5% growth in 2025.

Last week, the International Monetary Fund raised China's annual growth forecast by 0.2 percentage

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point to 4.6%. But it said it expects China's economy to expand just 4.1% in 2027.

Chinese leaders have sought to boost consumer spending through various initiatives, including trade-in subsidies for autos and home appliances. But many ordinary Chinese have been feeling the pressure from a slowing economy and avoiding big-ticket purchases.

Iran executes 2 Islamic State members convicted of armed rebellion

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Two members of the Islamic State group were executed after they were convicted of armed rebellion against the Islamic Republic, Iranian state television reported Tuesday.

The report identified the men as Mohieddin Abdollahi and Hossein Palani. It said they belonged to an Islamic State cell that formed after the group's territorial defeat in Iraq and Syria and had planned attacks inside Iran.

According to the report, Iranian security forces identified the cell's hideout in the Bamou mountain area near the Iraqi border before it could carry out its plans. Several militants were killed and others arrested during the operation, in which three members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard were also killed. Authorities said they also seized weapons, ammunition and other equipment.

The two men were convicted of armed rebellion against the Islamic Republic, and were hanged after the Supreme Court upheld their death sentences. The judiciary did not disclose where the executions were carried out.

Oil prices jump as fighting flares in the Middle East, while Asian shares are mixed

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Oil prices climbed early Tuesday as fighting intensified in the Middle East, while Asian shares were mixed as markets in Tokyo and Seoul rebounded from early losses.

The price of Brent crude climbed more than 2.3% to \$85.18 a barrel after soaring nearly 10% on Monday. U.S. benchmark crude was up 2.5% at \$80.15 a barrel.

Oil prices are still below their wartime peak of nearly \$120 a barrel, but uncertainty over the future stability of supplies has deepened as the U.S. and Iran each assert they control the Strait of Hormuz.

U.S. share futures were mixed as the U.S. launched more strikes on Iran after U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington was "reinstating" a blockade on Iran in the strait.

Fighting in the region has kept oil tankers from using the waterway to deliver crude to customers from the Persian Gulf, driving up fuel prices worldwide.

In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 0.7% to 67,743.50.

Shares in SoftBank Group, which has huge investments in AI, jumped 2.3% after its chairman, Masayoshi Son, gave a speech at a company event in Tokyo where he derided the idea that there is a bubble in investments in capacity for AI.

The Kospi in South Korea climbed 0.7% to 6,856.83.

The Shanghai Composite index gained 1.1% to 3,958.54. The government reported that China's exports jumped 27% in June from a year earlier as adoption of artificial intelligence drove strong demand for computer chips and other technology.

China is due to report its economic data for the last quarter on Wednesday.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng picked up 0.3% to 24,301.71, while in Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 edged less than 0.1% lower to 8,804.70.

On Wall Street on Monday, the S&P 500 fell 0.8%, coming off its fourth winning week in the past five. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.6%.

Chip stocks like Micron Technology helped lead the way lower. Micron fell 4.4%, eating into what had been a stellar rise of 243.1% for the year so far.

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Worries are rising that stock prices have shot too high and that the demand may not be sustainable if AI doesn't deliver as much profit and productivity as expected.

Nvidia fell 3.5%. Because it's the largest stock on Wall Street by value thanks to the euphoria around AI, it was the single heaviest weight on the S&P 500.

Attention is turning to profit reports for the spring. On Tuesday alone, Bank of America, Citigroup, JPM-organ Chase, Goldman Sachs and Wells Fargo all are releasing their latest quarterly results.

Analysts are forecasting that companies in the S&P 500 index will deliver overall growth of 23.6% from a year earlier, according to FactSet. If they are right, it would be the second straight quarter of growth better than 20%.

Companies across industries will need to deliver strong growth to justify the big moves their stock prices have made. Indexes are near records despite their sharp recent swings due to worries around AI stocks.

More costly oil would push inflation higher, potentially leading 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 other dealings early Tuesday, the U.S. dollar slipped to 162.35 Japanese yen from 162.46 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1387 from \$1.1382.

Subpoenas issued to NY Times reporters seen as 'unprecedented' threat to press freedom

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Dangerous. Brazen. Unprecedented. Uncharted territory.

Reaction in the media world has been swift and severe to the issue of subpoenas to five New York Times journalists who reported on security questions involving the new, Qatari-gifted Air Force One — a legal maneuver seen as a troubling escalation of the Trump administration's campaign to control and intimidate independent media outlets.

"The subpoenas are an extraordinary escalation in President Trump's efforts to threaten and intimidate independent news organizations, and have a chilling effect on the work of journalists across the country," said Jodie Ginsberg of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Media advocates and analysts expressed dismay at the tactic, even after months in which news organizations drawing President Donald Trump's ire have been attacked both in courtrooms and in the court of public opinion; media access to corridors of power has been blocked; and a Washington journalist's home has been searched by federal agents.

"They have used the levers of power to intimidate and demonize professional journalists who report stories that are unfavorable to the administration's desired narrative," said Frank Sesno, a former CNN White House bureau chief who is now a media and public affairs professor at George Washington University.

He called Friday's subpoenas "dangerous and uncharted territory, but merely an extension of what we have seen from this administration and president."

"Don't like a poll? Sue the Des Moines Register. Don't like the way an interview is edited? Sue '60 Minutes.' Don't like the coverage of the gifted Air Force One? Order the FBI to investigate and subpoena the journalists for what is, by the way, a story that is in the public interest."

Some of the subpoenas were delivered to reporters at home

Some of the subpoenas were delivered to reporters at their homes, the Times said. Sought by Jay Clayton, the U.S. Attorney in Manhattan, they seek to force the reporters to testify before a federal grand jury in Manhattan this week.

The new jet in question, a present from Qatar that the administration spent \$400 million to retrofit and upgrade, entered service last week. But Trump used an older model Air Force One jet to leave a NATO summit in Turkey.

The Times, citing anonymous sources, reported the switch had come at the urging of the Secret Service,

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and that the newer plane lacked some of the advanced security features of the older aircraft, including antimissile capabilities. On social media, Trump denied security concerns.

The subpoenas were issued after FBI Director Kash Patel and other Justice Department officials met at the White House on Friday to talk about the matter, according to a person familiar with the discussions who was not authorized to discuss the issue publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The Times said the meeting lasted around eight hours.

The fact that the operation was conducted from the White House itself was particularly egregious to analysts like Sesno, who called the coordination "unprecedented."

"This graphically illustrates the pressure and influence the White House and president have brought to bear on law enforcement that is supposed to be independent and driven by facts, not politics," he said.

The National Press Club called on the Justice Department "to immediately withdraw these subpoenas and reaffirm a principle that has long distinguished the United States: a free and independent press serves the people, not the government."

"Every American should understand what is at stake," Mark Schoeff Jr., the club's president, said in a statement. "When federal agents arrive at the homes of journalists with subpoenas, it is not ordinary law enforcement. It is an extraordinary assault on the freedom of the press that strikes at the heart of the First Amendment."

The Trump administration has initiated multiple lawsuits against media outlets

Trump's animosity toward news outlets whose agenda runs counter to his own isn't new. But in his second presidential term, he has launched an escalation, often harnessing the levers of the federal government or attempting to do so. These efforts have taken place both in actual courtrooms and in the court of public opinion.

The president has sued various news organizations whose coverage he dislikes. He has also threatened to revoke TV broadcast licenses. His FCC chairman is seeking to penalize shows like ABC's "The View," where some hosts speak out against Trump, by having the FCC explore revoking its exemption from equal-time rules.

The legal skirmishes include an escalating dispute between the media and Trump's Defense Department over reporters' access to the Pentagon. The Times has filed two lawsuits over a policy requiring journalists to be accompanied by escorts at the military complex.

The White House has also battled with The Associated Press over the news organization's refusal to follow Trump's executive order renaming the Gulf of Mexico. And it has battled with The Wall Street Journal over reporting about Jeffrey Epstein and his ties to the president — including an article that described a sexually suggestive letter that the newspaper said bore Trump's signature.

Last month, the Justice Department issued and then withdrew subpoenas that sought to compel reporters at The Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal to testify before a grand jury, according to people familiar with the matter.

The Post confirmed that one of its journalists received a subpoena from the Trump administration as part of a broader crackdown on media leaks that in January also included the extraordinary step of an FBI search of the home of another journalist at the newspaper and the seizure of her electronic devices. The media world was stunned by the search of the home of reporter Hannah Natanson, who was covering Trump's transformation of the federal government,

The Times is now gearing up for battle against what its lawyer, David McCraw, has called "this brazen act."

In an internal memo seen by the AP, the paper's executive editor, Joseph Kahn, criticized the subpoenas and said: "We expect to prevail. We have the best legal team in the business. ... The law protects news gatherers from this sort of retaliatory abuse of prosecutorial power. It is essential that the courts reaffirm that protection and quash this overreach. We are confident they will in this case."

Kahn praised the work of the five journalists — Tyler Pager, Eric Schmitt, Eric Lipton, Adam Goldman and Julian Barnes — and said they should know "that all of us as their colleagues, and the full resources of The Times, are behind them and that we will fight this legal abuse together."

Supreme Court justices to testify before Congress on increasing security funding in rare appearance

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court Justices Elena Kagan and Amy Coney Barrett will make a rare appearance before Congress Tuesday, weeks after the end of a historic term.

The justices are appearing before a House appropriations panel as the court seeks millions of dollars to beef up security amid a rise in threats to the judiciary.

Judges around the country have seen a rise in threats of violence and intimidation, including a fake swatting call to police about Barrett's home in May.

The hearing comes two weeks after the conservative-majority court finished handing down a series of major opinions, including a decision that increased President Donald Trump's power over federal regulatory agencies and another that rejected his wide-ranging tariffs, sparking harsh personal criticism.

It's the first time justices have testified before Congress since 2019, and the two justices could face wide-ranging questions as they seek to keep focus on the budget.

Security is central to the Supreme Court's budget request

The Supreme Court requested a total of \$228 million for next fiscal year, a roughly 10% increase over the year before. Nearly \$15 million of that would go to expanding personal protection for justices, with six more agents for each.

Another \$2 million would fund an off-site residential security post aimed at making emergency responses faster, as well as increasing the number of Supreme Court police officers.

The U.S. Marshals Service, responsible for protecting judges, reported 564 threats in the government fiscal year that ended in September, an increase from the year before.

That total includes threats to the hundreds of federal judges around the country, though the nine-member Supreme Court has not been immune.

In May, Barrett's security detail worked with police to quickly deal with the call determined to be swatting, or a fake 911 call designed to provoke a police response. Last year, her sister was the victim of a bomb threat in Charleston, South Carolina, police said. No bomb was found.

In 2022, shortly after the leak of a draft opinion overturning the Roe v. Wade abortion decision, a would-be assassin was arrested near the home of Justice Brett Kavanaugh with weapons and zip ties.

Chief Justice John Roberts has condemned the threats to all U.S. judges, saying during a speech in March that criticism of judicial opinions is understandable, but personally directed hostility is "dangerous, and it's got to stop."

US attacks Iran and Tehran retaliates across the Middle East as both vie for control of strait

By JON GAMBRELL, JOSH BOAK, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. launched strikes on Iran early Tuesday morning, hours after President Donald Trump said Washington is "reinstating" a blockade on Iran in the Strait of Hormuz. Trump separately suggested the United States will charge other ships for safe passage, upending hundreds of years of American policy supporting freedom of navigation across the globe.

Iran responded with attacks targeting Bahrain, Jordan and two tankers associated with the United Arab Emirates traveling through the strait, killing one mariner and wounding eight others. The Emirates threatened to retaliate against Iran, potentially drawing the nation home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai back into fighting with Tehran.

The attacks come as Iran and the U.S. both vie for control of the strait through which a fifth of all traded crude oil and natural gas once passed in peacetime. The price of benchmark Brent crude oil rose to a one-month high of over \$84 in trading early Tuesday, still well below the nearly \$120 reached at the height of the war but threatening to make costs everywhere higher.

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Trump insists strait will be open

The U.S. military's Central Command said it struck areas around Abu Musa, Bandar Abbas, Bushehr, Chahbahar, Jask and Konarak, targeting Iranian "coastal defense systems, missile and drone sites and maritime capabilities." Iran acknowledged strikes around those areas, but provided no immediate casualty or damage assessments.

"These strikes will continue imposing a heavy cost on Iranian forces and degrade their ability to attack innocent civilians and commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," the U.S. military said.

Moments after the military announced the new strikes, Trump called it "another major attack."

"We're hitting them very hard. And it'll continue, and we'll see what happens," he told reporters in the Oval Office. "We're knocking out all of their offensive capability and we're controlling the straits. We're putting the blockade back."

Trump also provided new details on his administration doing an about-face and suggesting it will charge tolls for ships going through the strait, after previously suggesting that it wouldn't.

"We're protecting a very rich portion of the world," he said. "We're spending money. And so, what we've done is, we are going to be reimbursed for protection."

It's a change in U.S. policy that, until now, said the strait should remain open to all without tolls — as it was before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28. Any attempt by the U.S. or Iran to charge fees would violate global norms on freedom of navigation and raise tensions, likely causing further economic disruption far beyond the region.

The U.S. Navy has fought for freedom of navigation on the seas since the Barbary Wars and the War of 1812.

Attacks resume across the Mideast

The United Arab Emirates' Defense Ministry said early Tuesday that Iran attacked two tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, killing one mariner and wounding eight others.

The Emirati Defense Ministry said Iran launched two cruise missiles at the tankers Mombasa and Al Bahiyah.

The attacks set both tankers ablaze, though the fires were extinguished.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard claimed the attack on the tankers, saying the vessels "ignored repeated warnings."

"They chose to pass through a minefield and were subsequently targeted and disabled," the Guard said.

Bahrain also came under renewed attack early Tuesday morning as Iran retaliated over the latest round of U.S. airstrikes. Bahrain sounded its missile alert sirens twice, urging the public to seek shelter. There was no word on any damage or casualties from the attack.

The Emirati Defense Ministry said the attack on the tankers killed one Indian national and wounded six Indians and two Ukrainians.

"The UAE reserves its full right to respond to this escalation and to take all necessary measures to protect its territory, its citizens and residents," the Defense Ministry added.

The Emirates used similar language before launching attacks against Iran during the war. Fighter jets could be heard overheard Tuesday morning in Dubai.

The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the U.S. Consulate in Dubai alerted Americans early Tuesday that consular appointments had been canceled through Wednesday "due to the regional security situation."

Jordan's military said it intercepted four missiles from Iran, according to a statement carried by the kingdom's state-run Petra news agency. Jordan hosts U.S. forces and has come under attack by Tehran in recent days.

Trump says Iran failed a test

Earlier Monday, Trump told conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt that the agreement reached last month was "built to test" Iran, adding that "when you're dealing with sleazebags (agreements) don't mean much."

"They didn't honor the test," the president said.

Iran asserts it has the right to manage traffic through the strait and potentially charge fees in accordance with the interim peace deal. The U.S. has disputed that.

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The American military and the United Nations' International Maritime Organization have tried to establish a route through the strait along the coast of Oman that would be outside of Iranian control. Iran has attacked ships using that route, saying the U.S. is violating the interim peace deal. The U.S. has attacked Iran in response, drawing Iranian attacks on U.S.-allied Arab states.

Exchanges of fire in recent days had already cast further doubt on the interim peace deal. Washington had lifted a blockade it imposed in mid-April as part of that deal, which also called for the strait to be fully reopened.

"We are reinstating the THE IRANIAN BLOCKADE," Trump said on social media. "All other countries will have fair and open use of the Strait."

The president said the U.S. would be "reimbursed" by 20% of the value of cargo to help cover "any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security."

The U.S. military said it will resume its blockade of Iranian ports at midnight local Wednesday in Dubai.

Why it's so difficult for the US to fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz

By BEN FINLEY, FARNOUSH AMIRI and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has been trying to force Iran to fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz for months, turning to everything from airstrikes and naval blockades to negotiations and threats to destroy a "whole civilization."

But restoring oil tanker traffic in the vital Middle East shipping corridor to prewar flows likely will require a much bigger armada of U.S. warships if not tens of thousands of American troops on Iranian soil, experts say. Despite on-and-off fighting, Iran can still target vessels in the narrow Persian Gulf waterway with drones and missiles that have been hidden in a country a third of the size of the continental United States.

"Iran has been preparing for this type of asymmetric conflict for decades now," said Jason H. Campbell, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute and a former Pentagon official. "I think they're starting to demonstrate why no other U.S. president since Reagan has elected to engage at this level of conflict with Iran, because they have that ability to completely disrupt the Strait of Hormuz."

Trump said Monday that the U.S. is reimposing its blockade on Iran's ports and will charge other ships for safe passage through the strait. Iran has insisted it controls the waterway, through which 20% of the world's oil normally flows, while both sides have exchanged fire over the past week in a series of skirmishes that threaten a return to all-out war.

It underscores the bind that Trump is in as commercial shipping remains stifled in the strait, oil prices are rising again and Iran has shown no sign of capitulating. The war has been unpopular with many Americans and could factor into the upcoming midterm elections with gas prices high.

"They thought the situation was under control, and now they're seeing renewed escalations, and the markets responding negatively to this," said Eric Lob, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Middle East program and a professor of politics and international relations at Florida International University.

"It's really a kind of test of wills to see how much economic pain the Iranians are willing to absorb and then how much economic pain and even political liability this could be for Trump and the Republicans heading into November," Lob said.

Securing the strait could require ground troops

Before he was a scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington, Campbell was a researcher at RAND, where he worked in coordination with the U.S. military to simulate war-game scenarios against Iran.

"The things they're doing now are precisely the types of things that were discussed and came up in really all of these types of situational scenarios," Campbell said.

Iran produces parts for its weapons across different facilities to reduce their risk of being attacked, Campbell said. Its military units are often allowed to operate without waiting for orders from Tehran. They don't often mass in one place, making airstrikes less effective.

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"It's very difficult to envision any scenario where you could satisfactorily secure the Strait of Hormuz absent ground forces," Campbell said.

Doing so would require tens of thousand of troops, Campbell said, not only to take out Iran's hidden munitions but to secure hundreds of miles of coastline and large swaths of inland territory. The U.S. troops would likely face insurgent attacks.

Standing up that kind of force would take a few months and include "very high costs," Campbell said.

Trump insisted Monday evening that "the strait is open. It will be open," and that the U.S. has made significant progress degrading Iran's capabilities in just a few months. Iran vowed to fight back against any U.S. interference in the strait.

Risk of US losses goes up with an increased presence

Another way to facilitate commercial traffic safely through the strait would be the continuation — and escalation — of U.S. warships guiding civilian vessels, experts say. But it comes with its own challenges and costs.

The U.S. conducted an escort operation in the 1980s when Iran had targeted shipping as part of its war with neighboring Iraq. The U.S., which supported Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with intelligence, weaponry and other aid, escorted Kuwaiti oil tankers — which were reflagged as American.

Such an effort today would require a substantial number of U.S. warships at a time when the fleet is smaller than it was in the 1980s, said Michael Eisenstadt, a former U.S. military analyst.

"You'd still need a very large chunk of the U.S. fleet being dedicated to this on an open-ended basis," said Eisenstadt, who now directs the Military and Security Studies Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

He said it is a much more complicated environment today as Iran has amassed advanced capabilities, including its ability to launch drone and missile strikes.

"If we were to do what we need to do in order to make this work, which might involve putting people ashore in order to clear anti-cruise missile and drone launch sites, the losses of U.S. service members can go up, and if you're going to do an escort operation also, the losses can potentially go up," Eisenstadt added.

Iran's threats alone can scare away ships

Commercial vessels have been avoiding traditional routes through the strait out of fear of Iranian mines. Iran has demanded that ships use a route near its coastline and that it can potentially charge fees under an interim deal to end the war. Ships have been increasingly navigating a southern route along the coast of Oman under a U.S. overwatch operation that guided them using drones and aircraft.

Capt. Tim Hawkins, U.S. Central Command spokesman, said mine clearance operations are ongoing for some traditional routes through the strait but that "alternative pathways have been open."

The southern route hasn't stopped Iranian attacks on ships, leading the U.S. military to strike Iranian air defense systems, radar sites, missile and drone equipment, and small boats.

But Iran's threats alone can be enough to halt commerce in the strait, said Noam Raydan, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy focused on energy and maritime risks in the Middle East.

"They don't need to launch drones and missiles — they can just use the marine radio channel to make some threats," Raydan said. "And this in itself is enough to scare off a lot of seafarers."

Clayton Seigle, a nonresident scholar in energy security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Trump administration has not followed through on promises it made early on in the war to militarily assist shipments that became a liability of the conflict.

"Those naval escorts, U.S. warships, larger commitments like boots on the ground never came because I think that the rhetoric got a little ahead of our risk tolerance," Seigle said. "And when push came to shove, the United States was not ready to deploy its Navy, to deploy its other military forces in the capacity that would be needed to even have a shot at neutralizing those threats."

ICE officer who fatally shot driver in Maine was 'fearing for public safety,' agency says

By PATRICK WHITTLE, LEAH WILLINGHAM and JACK BROOK Associated Press

BIDDEFORD, Maine (AP) — An Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent fatally shot a motorist in Maine on Monday, the second time in a week that ICE has used deadly force and at least the ninth death since President Donald Trump began his immigration crackdown.

Immigrant rights groups identified the man who was killed in Biddeford as a 26-year-old native of Colombia. The Colombian Embassy said it was in contact with U.S. authorities about the Colombian national's death and "is providing the necessary consular assistance to his family."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE, said in a post on X that agents were surveilling an address for a person with a final order of removal from the country. When ICE tried to stop a vehicle driven by someone coming from that address, the "vehicle attempted to flee the scene and, fearing for public safety, an officer discharged his weapon," the department said.

Prior to the brief ICE statement on the incident, Maine U.S. Sen. Angus King said Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin told him the officer opened fire after the man tried to use his vehicle as a weapon against ICE agents in Biddeford, a coastal city roughly 15 miles (24 kilometers) southwest of Portland. The agents involved didn't have body cameras, he said.

When asked about the contrasting statements, King told CNN that that's what the investigation is all about.

"Did this young man actually try to run over an ICE agent or was he in danger of running over other people in the street?" he said. "Was there a reasonable expectation of bodily harm or deadly force to justify this shooting?"

DHS did not immediately respond to an email seeking clarity on what led to the shooting.

King, an independent, said Mullin also told him the officers were in Biddeford to serve an arrest warrant but that it was not for the person who was shot. King said Mullin told him that earlier information that the man was the target of an enforcement action was incorrect.

U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, said Mullin told her the Homeland Security Department's Office of Inspector General is investigating in cooperation with the FBI.

Messages seeking comment were left for the inspector general's office and the Maine Department of Public Safety.

The Maine attorney general's office, which is also investigating, said initial statements suggest the motorist was trying to flee in the direction of the agent. The office said the agent who killed him has been placed on leave.

Witness says he heard driver say, 'I tried to stop'

Daniel Boucher said he looked out his third-floor window after hearing a "pop, pop, pop" sound and saw a small car "turned 90 degrees to the curb" with an SUV behind it. The driver was wounded and the car started moving down the street until the SUV hit it, Boucher said.

"His face was bloody. His head was bloody," Boucher said, getting choked up. "I clearly heard the victim say, 'I tried to stop.'"

Boucher said he saw an ICE officer bring a medical bag to where the man was lying before an ambulance and fire truck arrived. At one point, Boucher said, the agent who shot the man walked close to him.

"I was emotional and I just let him have it, and he looked at me and said, 'He tried to run me over,' or something to that effect," Boucher said. "I don't remember his exact words."

Video from a security camera at a nearby business, obtained by the AP, shows a white vehicle approaching an intersection at a modest speed before making several slow circles. A law enforcement SUV blocked its path and two officers open the driver's door and dragged out a limp body.

It was not clear from the video at what point shots were fired.

The man was authorized to work in the US, advocates say

Two advocacy groups — the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition and Presente! — said the man who was

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killed was authorized to work in the U.S.

After the shooting, his family contacted the Immigrants' Rights Coalition, but they weren't ready to speak publicly about the shooting, said the group's executive director, Mufalo Chitam.

Mary Hayes, who lives close to where the shooting happened, said the man lived nearby with his wife and daughter.

"I watched a wife fall to her knees looking at her husband's dead body on the ground," Hayes told the AP as she held a piece of cardboard with "No ICE Stop ICE" written on it. "I watched a little girl crying with a little pink backpack on because she's never going to see her father again."

Sadie Dilboy said the man killed in the shooting regularly came to her laundromat and would bring his daughter, who he'd give quarters to buy candy from the vending machine.

"He was such a good person," she said. "He was always cleaning up."

Anti-ICE protesters gather near the scene

Several hundred demonstrators gathered in Biddeford on Monday night to wave anti-ICE signs and call for the agency to be abolished.

"We will always be a city of immigrants," said Maine Speaker of the House Ryan Fecteau, a Democrat from Biddeford.

A handful of pro-ICE and pro-Trump protesters demonstrated across the street.

Some demonstrators had gathered in the city within hours of the shooting. Amy Goodman arrived with a sign that said "Stop Killing Us" and directed it toward police working at the scene.

"Sadly, it's something we're seeing a whole lot more often lately, and I'm mad about it," she said.

A recent uptick in Trump's immigration crackdown

On July 7, an ICE officer fatally shot 52-year-old Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, of Houston, after federal agents driving unmarked vehicles pursued him while he was taking his construction crew to a job site.

The shootings come amid a Trump administration push to carry out its mass deportations agenda. During the five-day period at the end of June, ICE arrested more than 10,000 people.

The figures indicate that while the administration is no longer cracking down on individual cities, the arrests are surging. The administration's enforcement efforts were widely condemned last winter after the killings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good in Minnesota.

Hundreds of Maine ICE arrests since Trump's return

ICE had a significant presence in Maine earlier this year, which prompted several protests. Immigration officials later said in late January that they had ceased "enhanced operations" in Maine after hundreds of arrests.

A Homeland Security spokesperson said at the time that some Maine arrests were of people "convicted of horrific crimes" including aggravated assault and endangering the welfare of a child.

Court records show that while some had felony convictions, others had unresolved immigration proceedings or had been arrested but never convicted of a crime.

ICE arrested 546 people in Maine between the start of Trump's second term and March 11, 2026, the most recent data available, according to ICE arrest data provided to the University of California, Berkeley Deportation Data Project and analyzed by the AP.

About 45% of arrested people had criminal backgrounds. During the equivalent 416-day period before Trump took office, roughly 69% of those arrested had criminal backgrounds, the data shows.

Trump reduces size of 2 national monuments in Utah as Republicans reshape land management

By MATTHEW BROWN and SAVANNAH PETERS Associated Press

President Donald Trump on Monday sharply reduced the size of two national monuments in Utah, undoing protections established by his Democratic predecessors on public lands that are sacred among many Native Americans.

Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in southern Utah have ancient cliff dwell-

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ings, petroglyphs and scenic canyons, as well as coal and uranium deposits that state officials want made available for development.

Trump, a Republican, issued proclamations under the Antiquities Act to reduce their size by about 90% each. He took similar actions during his first term, but those were reversed by President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

The latest move comes as Trump and other Republicans have drastically reshaped the management of vast taxpayer-owned lands concentrated in Western states. Trump administration officials and congressional Republicans have sought to expand drilling, mining and logging on public lands, while removing protections for imperiled species and rolling back rules for conservation.

"They took the land from the people quite honestly," Trump said at a signing event at the White House Monday. "We're giving it back."

President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, established Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in 1996, and President Barack Obama, also a Democrat, created Bears Ears National Monument in 2016 under the Antiquities Act. The 1906 law gives presidents the powers to protect sites considered historic, archaeologically significant or culturally important.

Davina Smith-Idjesa, a citizen of the Navajo Nation and co-chair of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, said tribal leaders had braced for a reduction since Trump was elected to a second term. She said it was "heartbreaking" and accused federal officials of sidestepping their legal responsibility to consult with tribal nations that would be impacted.

"From a Navajo perspective, Bears Ears is not simply a piece of federal public land," Smith-Idjesa said. "This is a living cultural site that holds our histories, our ceremonies, our traditional foods and medicines and our ancestors' footprints."

'Big day for Utah'

Utah officials had long fought against the monument designations and argued that the state should be in charge of controlling its own lands. Trump in his first term reduced their size, calling their creation a "massive land grab." Combined they spanned more than 3.2 million acres (13 million hectares), an area nearly the size of Connecticut.

Trump reduced them Monday to less than 303,000 acres (123,000 hectares) combined.

That's a greater reduction than his first term, when he left Grand Staircase Escalante at 1 million acres (405,000 hectares) and Bears Ears at 213,000 acres (86,000 hectares).

"This is a big day for Utah," Utah Gov. Spencer Cox as he stood next to Trump at the White House. "These monument designations are supposed to be the smallest area as possible to protect the antiquities."

Bears Ears was the first national monument created at the request of tribal nations that consider the land sacred. The landscape contains ancestral villages, ceremonial and burial sites and features in some tribes' creation and migration stories. Its designation honored five tribes in the region — Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain Ute and Uintah-Ouray Ute.

Home to hundreds of thousands of objects of cultural and scientific significance, Bears Ears is jointly managed by an agreement between tribal nations and federal agencies.

Grand Staircase-Escalante consists of cliffs, canyons, natural arches and archaeological sites, including rock paintings. It holds large coal reserves, while the Bears Ears area has uranium.

The national monument designation provides sweeping protections not just for significant geological features or artifacts but also for the surrounding landscape, banning drilling, mining and new construction nearby. Proponents of Trump's move to downsize say the protective boundaries stretch too far and hinder mining for critical minerals.

Trump asserted Monday that people can not hunt, fish or "virtually not even walk" on the monuments. That's false: Hunting, fishing, camping and other recreation are permitted under state and federal regulations, said Steve Bloch, legal director for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, a conservation group.

Biden designated or expanded more than a dozen monuments and had a goal to conserve at least 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

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Trump's policies are largely the opposite: He wants to tap into the natural resource wealth of federal lands that total more than 100,000 square miles (260,000 square kilometers) and offshore areas under federal control, such as in the Gulf of Mexico and off Alaska.

That's drawn backlash from Democrats who warn of the wholesale disposal of treasured landscapes for commercial gain.

"Today's executive action is another chapter in this administration's war on the West," Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico said Monday. He added that Trump was "turning the Antiquities Act on its head."

Land sale proposals fell flat

Trump Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said last year that federal officials would review and consider redrawing monument boundaries as part of a push to expand U.S. energy production.

Trump in his current term has used proclamations to lift commercial fishing prohibitions within expansive marine monuments in areas of the Pacific Ocean and in the Atlantic Ocean off the New England coast. Those monuments were created by Democratic and Republican administrations. The effort to boost the fishing industry, which has been challenged in court, marks a dramatic shift in federal policy by prioritizing commercial interests over efforts to allow the fish supply to increase.

Some Republicans have tried to sell or transfer federal lands to states or other entities. Those efforts have largely fallen flat: A push by some GOP lawmakers in the House to sell public lands ran into bipartisan opposition, while another proposal by Sen. Mike Lee of Utah to sell more than 3,200 square miles (8,300 square kilometers) of federal lands was removed from Republicans' big tax and spending bill.

The U.S. Supreme Court last year turned back a lawsuit from Utah officials who sought to wrest control of vast areas of public land within the state from the federal government.

What to know about Trump's order shrinking the size of 2 national monuments in Utah

By MATTHEW BROWN and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Revisiting actions from his first term that were reversed, President Donald Trump announced Monday that he will scale back the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in Utah.

The Republican's actions undo proclamations from his predecessors who deemed the sites worthy of preservation under the Antiquities Act, a 1906 law that gives presidents power to protect areas of cultural, historic or scientific interest.

Trump made similar moves during his first term, but many were reversed by his successor, President Joe Biden.

The back-and-forth underscores how national monuments have become a flashpoint over the management of public lands. Trump is not the first president to reduce the size of monuments.

Here's a look at U.S. national monuments and presidents who have created or reshaped them:

How many national monuments have Biden and Trump acted on?

Trump made only a handful of Antiquities Act proclamations during his first term, including two that reduced the size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments. The sprawling Utah monuments include stunning natural features and sites sacred to some Native American tribes. Grand Staircase-Escalante also holds large coal reserves, while the Bears Ears area has uranium.

Trump also dedicated the Camp Nelson National Monument in Kentucky — a Union Army hospital and recruiting center for African American troops during the Civil War.

Biden's first use of the act was to restore the size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante. He cited their spiritual, cultural and prehistoric legacy.

Biden established 10 new monuments, among them the site of a 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois, and a monument honoring Mamie Till-Mobley and her son, Emmett, a Black teenager from Chicago who

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was tortured and killed in 1955 after he was accused of whistling at a white woman in Mississippi. He also established monuments in the mountains of California and on a sacred Native American site near the Grand Canyon.

State officials, conservationists and tribes react

Proponents of the reductions said the protective boundaries stretched too far and hindered mining for essential minerals.

Combined, the two monuments spanned more than 3.2 million acres (13 million hectares), an area nearly the size of Connecticut. Trump reduced them Monday to less than 303,000 acres (123,000 hectares) combined — a greater reduction than his first term. He framed the move as giving back land to the people.

The order was applauded by Utah officials, who have long argued that the state should manage its own lands.

"The question has never been whether to protect them, but how to protect them best," said Gov. Spencer Cox, a Republican. His office assured the lands left out of the modified boundaries "remain protected under existing federal and state law."

But some conservationists and citizens of local tribal nations warned the order opens the door to mining while disrespecting tribal co-stewardship. Bears Ears is jointly managed by an agreement between tribal nations and federal agencies.

"Our connection to this place cannot be erased by the stroke of a pen," said Davina Smith-Idjesa, a citizen of the Navajo Nation and co-chair of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition.

Is it legal to shrink or eliminate monuments?

Environmental groups have argued the Antiquities Act is a one-way road that allows presidents to create but not undo monuments. But there's a history of presidents taking actions similar to Trump's.

Since 1912, presidents have issued more than a dozen proclamations that diminished monuments, according to a National Park Service database.

In Washington state, Woodrow Wilson reduced the acreage of Mount Olympus National Park — now Olympic National Park — by roughly half. Harry Truman did the same for Santa Rosa Island National Monument.

Dwight Eisenhower was most active in undoing proclamations of his predecessors as he diminished six monuments, including Arches in Utah, Great Sand Dunes in Colorado and Glacier Bay in Alaska, which have all since become national parks.

How is a national monument different from a national park or forest?

Unlike national parks, which are established by Congress, most of the more than 100 national monuments were created by presidents.

They're governed by one or more agencies such as the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A designation provides sweeping protections not just for significant geological features or artifacts but also for the surrounding landscape, banning drilling, mining and new construction.

The U.S. Forest Service was established in 1905 and has jurisdiction over some 300,000 square miles (775,000 square kilometers) of land, including 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands in 43 states.

Under federal law, the forest lands are managed for renewable resources — including timber, clean water, wildlife habitat, forage for livestock and recreation. Many forests overlay valuable minerals, and parcels can be leased by private companies for the extraction of nonrenewable resources such as oil, gas and coal.

National parks have some of the most stringent rules against development under a 1916 law known as the Organic Act. The law says the fundamental purpose of the parks is to conserve their scenery, nature, history and wildlife.

How long have presidents been creating monuments?

President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act after a generation of lobbying by educators and scientists who wanted to protect sites from commercial artifact looting and haphazard collecting by individuals. It was the first law in the U.S. to establish legal protections for cultural and natural resources of historic or scientific interest on federal lands.

On Sept. 24, 1906, Roosevelt used it to designate a national monument at Devils Tower — a giant rock butte in eastern Wyoming that later gained fame as the focus of the movie “Close Encounters of the Third Kind.”

All but three presidents have used the act to protect unique landscapes and cultural resources.

Feds turn over evidence in Renee Good and Alex Pretti killings to Minnesota after months of delay

By PHILIP MARCELO and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

Federal prosecutors turned over key evidence long sought by Minnesota investigators in their ongoing probe into the fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti during pitched protests against an immigration enforcement crackdown earlier this year, state prosecutors announced Monday.

The progress came as a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed a motorist in Maine on Monday, and Houston prosecutors complained the administration was still withholding critical information in their investigation into a fatal shooting by an ICE officer last week.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said the evidence turned over by U.S. Attorney for Minnesota Daniel Rosen’s office included previously withheld hard drives containing statements, police body camera video and other materials in the Minnesota killings. Federal prosecutors also turned over Good’s badly damaged SUV, she said.

“The wonderful thing now is we have all the evidence,” Moriarty said. “Any time the government is responsible in whatever way of taking the life of a community member we need to have a full and thorough investigation.”

Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, was shot and killed in her vehicle while leaving an anti-immigration enforcement protest in Minneapolis on Jan. 7.

Her death and that of Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse shot and killed days later during a Jan. 24 protest, sparked outrage across the country and calls to rein in immigration enforcement.

The Minneapolis immigration crackdown, dubbed “Operation Metro Surge,” ended in February after being billed as the largest immigration enforcement operation ever.

At least nine people have been killed nationwide since the Trump administration’s immigration enforcement campaign began last year. No one has been charged in connection with the deaths, and the federal government has suggested state prosecutors don’t have jurisdiction to investigate federal officers.

Lawyers for Good’s family said the transfer of evidence represented “an important and meaningful step towards justice and accountability.” The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, which took custody of the evidence, declared that “great strides have been made” to ensure a “thorough and complete review” of the shootings.

But a lawyer for Pretti’s family said Rosen’s office, in a meeting Monday afternoon, wouldn’t confirm any cooperation agreement between state and federal agencies.

“No family should be required to beg federal authorities to do their job,” Steve Schleicher said in a statement. “Without a public commitment by federal authorities to cooperate with the state, it is difficult — if not, impossible — to pursue justice that holds the individuals accountable for Alex’s death.”

Spokespersons for Rosen’s office, as well as ICE and the federal Department of Homeland Security, which oversees immigration enforcement, didn’t immediately respond to emails seeking comment Monday.

Legal wrangling in another ICE-related shooting may have led to evidence release

Moriarty on Monday declined to provide details on what prompted the federal government to turn over the evidence.

But documents recently filed in a lawsuit brought by state and local officials suggest the breakthrough came after federal officials sought evidence state investigators gathered in the investigation of ICE agent Christian Castro.

Castro, 52, was charged with assault and falsely reporting a crime in connection with the Jan. 14 nonfatal shooting of Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis. Prosecutors say Castro fired through a Minneapolis home’s front door

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and shot Sosa-Celis in the thigh while in pursuit of another man.

State and local prosecutors said they would provide evidence in Castro's case as soon as the federal government agreed to share its evidence in the shootings of Pretti and Good.

"We are willing to share evidence with you if the exchange is reciprocal," Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Superintendent Drew Evans wrote in a legal filing to federal officials.

Moriarty and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison later amended their lawsuit to add details about the federal government's refusal to share the evidence collected in the fatal shootings.

Days later, they said in a court filing that the FBI, U.S. Attorney's Office and state officials "have recently re-engaged in discussions about the prospect of mutual information sharing."

Ellison, in a statement Monday, said he remains "deeply troubled" it took more than half a year for federal officials to hand over the materials.

"It should never have taken this long," he said. "I hope that this is the beginning of a major course correction on the part of the federal government."

Moriarty added that she's not yet prepared to drop the lawsuit against the Trump administration, which seeks access to evidence in the three shootings.

Houston investigators complain feds are leaving them in the dark

Prosecutors in Houston, meanwhile, echoed similar concerns about obtaining critical information from federal officials as they look into last week's death of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a Mexican national who had lived in the U.S. for decades.

DHS has acknowledged officers stopped Salgado Araujo while looking for someone else, but maintains the homebuilder rammed an ICE vehicle while attempting to leave the scene. The agency says that prompted an officer to open fire in self-defense, though it has yet to provide evidence to back up that claim.

Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare said Monday that his office doesn't even know the identities of the ICE officers involved or where they are nearly a week later.

"The federal government has not invited us in," Teare said. "The federal government is not collaborating with us with this investigation."

The man killed Monday in Maine was from Colombia. Federal officers claimed he tried to use his vehicle as a weapon against officers pursuing him for deportation. The shooting took place in Biddeford, a coastal city of about 23,000 people roughly 15 miles (24 kilometers) southwest of Portland.

Neither France nor Spain has trailed at this year's World Cup, but only one can reach the final

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Kylian Mbappé and France haven't trailed at all in this year's World Cup. Neither has Spain with teenage sensation Lamine Yamal and clutch goal-scoring substitute Mikel Merino.

Only one of those teams can make it to the final.

France and Spain, both at their 17th World Cup, have met only once previously on soccer's biggest stage. They play Tuesday at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys in the first of two powerhouse semifinal matches.

After entering this tournament as FIFA's top-ranked team, France has outscored its opponents 14-2. Mbappé, the 2022 Golden Boot winner, has eight goals to match Lionel Messi for the scoring lead this time, and is one behind the Argentina captain's career record of 21 at the World Cup.

"We are confident, of course, with the course we have done so far, and we have to be," France midfielder Adrien Rabiot said. "But always with this humility that has characterized us since the beginning of the competition."

The 27-year-old Mbappé has 20 goals in his 20 World Cup matches, including one in the 2018 win over Croatia when he joined Pele as the only teenagers to score in a World Cup final. Coach Didier Deschamps said Mbappé is fine physically after exiting in the 77th minute of Les Bleus' quarterfinal win over Morocco after scoring a goal.

Yamal, who turned 19 on Monday, has already been part of two semifinal wins with Spain over France.

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He was just days shy of his 17th birthday when he scored in a 2-1 win during the 2024 European Championship semifinals, and Spain won 5-4 in Nations League play last year.

"I believe if France has to fear anyone, it should be us, in my opinion," Yamal said after Spain's quarter-final victory over Belgium. "We were the ones that knocked them out before."

The teen has only one goal while putting 10 shots on target after coming into this World Cup still nursing a left hamstring issue. He missed the final weeks of the season for Spanish club Barcelona.

"It's the most important match I'm going to play," Yamal said Monday, adding his best birthday gift would be a victory and trip to the final. "We are all so excited, especially me."

France defender Jules Koundé also plays for Barcelona, so he knows Yamal well and didn't feel disrespected by the earlier comments.

"He always does it with (Barcelona). He trusts a lot in his virtues, in the virtues of the team where he plays," Koundé said in translated remarks. "An extra motivation for him and that's it, that's all."

Spain has outscored opponents 10-1 since a scoreless draw against surprising Cape Verde to open group play, but La Roja got late decisive goals from Merino as a late substitute in the past two games. And goal-tender Unai Simón set a World Cup record of 650 minutes without allowing a goal until Belgium scored in the 41st minute of their quarterfinal game.

"I think that from the first game until today, the team needed to catch the rhythm, we had been without seeing each other for a long time," Spain midfielder Alex Baena said, adding that with more games and practices "the better the team has been."

Merino scored in the 88th minute for that 2-1 win over Belgium on Friday. That came after the Arsenal forward's goal in the first minute of second-half stoppage time for the 1-0 win over Portugal in the round of 16 at the same stadium where Spain's semifinal match will be played.

Quartet of past champions

This is the first World Cup since 1990 that each of the final four teams are former champions.

Messi and defending champion Argentina, which beat France for the title in 2022, play England in the other semifinal match Wednesday in Atlanta.

The championship match is Sunday at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, across the river from New York City. A third-place game will be played Saturday in Miami Gardens, Florida.

Both have raised World Cup trophy since they last met in the tourney

In their only previous World Cup meeting, France beat Spain 3-1 in a round of 16 game at the 2006 tournament in Germany.

Both teams have won the World Cup since then. Spain claimed its only title in 2010, and France won its second World Cup in 2018.

France, which will be playing on its country's Bastille Day national holiday, is trying to join five-time champion Brazil and four-time winner Germany as the only teams to make three consecutive World Cup finals. Brazil did it in 1994, 1998 and 2002 — winning two titles and losing to host France in the middle of that run. Germany's championship in 1990 came after being runner-up in the previous two World Cups — all playing as West Germany at the time.

Argentina beat France in a penalty shootout in 2022 after playing to a 3-3 draw.

This is France's seventh semifinal appearance, its fifth in the last eight World Cups. Spain's only other semifinals were in 1950 and then 2010 on the way to the title.

Wrapping up in Dallas

AT&T Stadium in North Texas will be hosting its tournament-high ninth game, and in that one-month run there have been some soccer superstar moments in the building that has hosted a Super Bowl and NCAA championship games for football and men's basketball.

Messi scored three goals in Argentina's two group games, the first on June 22 when after missing a penalty kick he broke the World Cup career scoring mark with the first of his two goals in a 2-0 win over Austria. He added another goal as a late substitute in the group finale June 27 against Jordan.

Cristiano Ronaldo, the 41-year-old superstar from Portugal, finished his sixth and final World Cup in the 1-0 round of 16 loss to Spain on July 6.

Darline Graham Nordone, sister of Lindsey Graham, chosen to fulfill remainder of his US Senate term

By MEG KINNARD and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Lindsey Graham's sister, Darline Graham Nordone, has been named as her late brother's temporary replacement in the U.S. Senate after his unexpected death over the weekend.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster announced at a news conference at the Statehouse on Monday that Nordone would serve the remaining months on Graham's current term, which expires in January. Senate Majority Leader John Thune said afterward that she will be sworn in Tuesday afternoon.

Nordone will be the first woman to represent the state in the Senate.

"It is such an honor," she said, as dozens of Graham staffers and campaign advisers stood behind her, some with eyes glassy from welling tears. "Lindsey has always been there for me. And now, I will be there for him."

Graham died on Saturday night at age 71. He never married or had a family of his own, but Nordone was often by her brother's side for the political touch points of his career, speaking at events and appearing in some of his campaign ads.

After their parents died at a young age, Graham was left to raise his sister, for whom he later became legal guardian. They were very close, and she was there as he filed reelection paperwork earlier this year, along with her children and grandchildren.

"To Lindsey, I miss you more than I can even put into words," Nordone said, emotion rising in her voice. "But I'm going to do this. I got it."

Introducing Nordone, McMaster said the two had spoken in "in the wee hours of Sunday morning" after Graham's death, and he asked her to serve.

"I had wondered what you would say, and I was humbled by your quickness to see the duty that you had to serve," McMaster said. He added that President Donald Trump "thought it was a great idea" when he later told him of his pick. Trump announced his support for Nordone to fill the seat earlier Monday.

Nordone has worked as an optician and at various state agencies, including the South Carolina Commission for the Blind and the Department of Employment and Workforce. She lives in Lexington, is a graduate of the College of Charleston and has a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling.

How will a special primary work?

A special election will be held next month to pick a new Republican nominee in the general election for Graham's seat. He had been seeking a fifth term this year.

The rare open Senate seat has ignited a scramble among South Carolina's most ambitious conservatives, who have been eager to climb the political ladder.

Republicans just finished a sprawling and bruising contest to figure out their nominee for succeeding McMaster, who is wrapping up his second term. State Attorney General Alan Wilson won the nomination, overcoming a field that included Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, Rep. Nancy Mace and Ralph Norman — all of whom are now eyeing Graham's seat following his death over the weekend.

According to South Carolina law, a one-week filing period for a special primary election begins on the second Tuesday after the candidate's death, or July 21.

The special primary election would be held on the second Tuesday after that filing period closes, or Aug. 11. Any necessary runoff would follow two weeks after that, or Aug. 25.

From that point, the new nominee would have just over two months to campaign for the general election on Nov. 3.

All of this is problematic according to federal law, which requires military and overseas ballots to go out 45 days before any federal election. For the special election primary, that would have been June 27. Federal Election Commission officials didn't immediately return a message seeking clarity about the process.

Who could replace Graham?

Graham died on Saturday night, and a preliminary medical examiner report said he suffered a tear in

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his aorta, known as an aortic dissection.

In the hours after Graham's death was announced, South Carolina's Republican circles were already swirling with rumors about possible replacements.

Evette, who has served nearly eight years alongside McMaster and received his endorsement in the governor's race, is one possibility. She lost the June 23 runoff to Wilson.

Mace and Norman could run in the special primary as well. Neither of them are running for reelection to their House seats.

But another Republican from the state, Rep. Russell Fry, could be a possibility. The two-term lawmaker represents the growing area around Myrtle Beach, and he's been a top Trump ally.

Businessman Mark Lynch, whom Graham defeated in the primary, may jump into the race. So could Mark Sanford, the state's former governor who served two separate stints in the House.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who lived in South Carolina before joining the Trump administration, has fielded calls about potentially replacing Graham but doesn't have interest in the role and enjoys working for the president, according to a person who insisted on anonymity to describe private conversations.

How does Graham's death affect the general election?

No Democrat has won a Senate seat in South Carolina in decades, and Republicans in recent history typically take statewide seats by double digits. When Graham last ran in 2020, he defeated his Democratic opponent, Jaime Harrison, by a 10 percentage point margin.

So while history suggests that Graham was en route to a fifth term, Republicans are carefully surveying the landscape.

Charleston pediatrician Annie Andrews won the Democratic nomination last month and has raised more than \$8 million in the race, and she had just under \$3 million cash on hand at the end of May, according to federal filings. Graham had taken in \$6 million, with just over \$4 million on hand.

In a statement Sunday, Andrews called on South Carolinians to join her "in setting partisanship aside and offering gratitude" to Graham for his service.

Harrison, noting that he and Graham "had our share of political disagreements," wrote on social media that he "always appreciated that even in our fiercest political battles, we could still share a conversation, a laugh, and a mutual respect for South Carolina and the institutions we were both privileged to serve."

FACT FOCUS: A look at US and Iranian claims of control over the Strait of Hormuz

By MAE ANDERSON Associated Press

A focal point of the Iran war is increasingly about who controls the Strait of Hormuz — a narrow, elbow-shaped waterway that for decades was a relatively safe and reliable transit route for Middle East oil and natural gas supplies.

By saying that an interim ceasefire gave it the right to establish the terms under which ships traversed the strait, and threatening and firing upon vessels that did not use its preferred route, Iran has sought to exert control over the waterway and gain negotiating leverage with the United States.

On Monday, President Donald Trump sought to tip the scales. He reimposed a blockade on Iran and said the U.S. controls the strait and would charge fees to ships for safe passage — essentially borrowing from the Iranian playbook.

The announcement came as the U.S. and Iran have been ramping up attacks against each other to assert control over the strait, threatening a return to all-out war.

The world has long considered the strait — which passes the coastlines of Iran and Oman — a free-to-use, international waterway. But soon after it was attacked by the U.S. and Israel on Feb. 28, Iran claimed sovereignty over it, disrupting world energy markets and driving up prices.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

Both Iran and the US say they control the Strait of Hormuz

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In a posting on Truth Social on Monday, Trump said the U.S. "will be, from this point forward, known as THE GUARDIAN OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT."

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which controls the Islamic Republic's ballistic missile arsenal, says Tehran controls the strait. "We will not allow a rogue and child-killing army from the other side of the world to continue its illegal interference in it," the Guard said Sunday.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, established in 1982, no country has the right to claim international waters and all ships have the right of unimpeded passage.

Even though the U.S. and Iran haven't ratified the convention, "that doesn't matter, because this has become part of universal custom, so all states can rely on it under all circumstances," said Marc Weller, director of the International Law Program at the University of Cambridge.

Still, both Iran and the U.S. have been using tools to exert control over the strait and constrain traffic.

"You have two nations, both of which are very capable — the U.S., because it has the most powerful Navy in the world, and Iran, which is geographically well positioned to disrupt commerce throughout the Strait of Hormuz — (and) can exercise a significant degree of control," said Raymond Waid, who leads the maritime industry group at law firm Liskow & Lewis in New Orleans and is a former Navy officer.

Maritime data agency Kpler said crossings declined by around 52% between Friday and Monday compared with the same period a week ago. About 14 ships passed through the strait on Sunday; before the war, about 130 ships passed through the strait daily.

Iran says it has made 'sincere' efforts to ensure safe shipping

The ability to disrupt shipping in the strait gives Iran leverage over the global economy.

Tehran used this leverage early in the war by attacking transiting ships and demanding payment in some cases to allow vessels through. Just the fear of being attacked by Iranian drones or speedboats was enough to deter ship traffic.

After an interim ceasefire was announced last month, Iran insisted that ships register with the recently created Persian Gulf Strait Authority to have their crews and cargo vetted.

Iran also is demanding that ships only use a route near its coastline instead of a southern route along the coast of Oman, where the U.S. military had started guiding ships through. The central part of the strait has been mined by Iran, so few vessels have tried to pass using that route.

Tehran is suspected of attacking ships that have used the Oman route. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Center, which issues maritime security alerts, said it received reports of six ships attacked in the strait near Oman since June 25.

Iranian officials assert the right to manage traffic through the strait

Washington and Tehran have debated what they agreed to regarding the strait. U.S. officials say the interim agreement signed last month called for the strait to be reopened while a more permanent resolution to the war was negotiated.

Iranian officials have said a clause in the interim deal gave them the right to manage ship traffic and that, so long as they didn't charge fees for 60 days, it was up to them to decide operating conditions.

The interim agreement stated that Iran will "make arrangements using its best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels with no charge for 60 days only from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and vice versa." It also called for Iran to "conduct dialog with the Sultanate of Oman to define the future administration and maritime services in the strait."

The US now says it will charge a fee for safe passage

The U.S. said Monday it will charge a 20% toll on cargo shipped through the strait "for any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the World."

That's something the U.S. previously opposed, and any attempt by the U.S. or Iran to charge fees would violate global norms on freedom of navigation.

The new U.S. plan echoes an earlier Iranian claim — which it opposed — that said it might charge tolls that could reach as high as \$2 million per vessel.

Countries can levy fees on ships for a specific service when passing through an international strait, said

Weller, the international law professor. For example, Chile collects fees in the Strait of Magellan for pilotage and other services that ensure safe passage, he said.

"A fee would be possible, but it has to be a fee commensurate with the actual service granted," he said. "So it's not anything Iran should earn money off. It's not \$2 million per vessel or something like that."

The International Maritime Organization, the United Nations agency which oversees safety and security measures in international shipping, said the group was waiting to find out more about Trump's proposal but said its stance against tolls for passage remains unchanged.

Late Monday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi used Trump's support for tolls to mock him and legitimize Iran's position.

"POTUS is absolutely right," he posted on X. "Whoever provides secure and safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz should be compensated for this service ... 20% is of course too much. We will be fair."

No relief from the heat as many US cities will see record overnight temperatures

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

Another week of blistering heat will bring even more health risks in the coming days, as overnight temperatures won't provide much relief.

The National Weather Service is predicting that more than 90 temperature records across the U.S. will be tied or broken this week through Wednesday — and most of those will be overnight heat records.

Health experts say overnight temperatures that fail to cool down are even more dangerous than daytime temperatures that soar.

It has already been a sweltering start to the summer across much of the U.S. due to the long-lasting heat dome expected to blanket much of the country this week. The blistering temperatures over the past few weeks have caused heat-related deaths in New Jersey and helped fuel wildfires in the West.

No relief from the heat at night this week

Temperatures were not forecast to drop below 80 F (27 C) at night in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Miami; Tampa, Florida; Galveston, Texas; and Charleston, South Carolina, the National Weather Service said.

Over the next few days, places in the Midwest and Northeast known for frigid winters will see nighttime temperatures remain above 70 F (21 C), including Fargo, North Dakota; International Falls, Minnesota; and Portland, Maine.

Hot temperatures at night pose a bigger danger

Health experts say that high overnight temperatures are particularly dangerous because there's no time for the body's core temperature to cool down and recover from daytime heat.

"That's where the health outcomes are amplified, particularly for the elderly and vulnerable communities," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd.

Just a few degrees of increased body temperature can lead to heatstroke or put too much strain on the heart.

Dangers of heat can sneak up on you

If temperatures at night don't cool down your body, the health risks more often show up the next day, said Kristie Ebi, a public health and climate scientist at the University of Washington.

"Mortality starts the second or third day" because the body's unable to cool, she said on Monday.

Being proactive is crucial during a heat wave

Early warning signs include heavy sweating, muscle cramps and headache. "It's hard to know you're getting in trouble with the heat. This is why we need to be more proactive," Ebi said.

It's important to find a way to cool off, whether stepping into air conditioning or wrapping a cold towel around your neck.

And health experts say don't forget to check in on friends and family members, especially those who are older, pregnant or who have health challenges that might make it more difficult to handle the heat.

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How to beat the heat without air conditioning
Even without air conditioning at home, there are ways to find relief.
Stop by a library or a mall. Sit in front of a fan and spray water on your skin. Put your feet in cold water.
Soak your clothes in water. And of course, drink plenty of water.

Judge says Trump IRS lawsuit was filed for 'improper purpose,' refers lawyer for possible discipline

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over his leaked tax returns was filed for an "improper purpose," a judge said Monday as she referred one of his lawyers for potential disciplinary action and characterized the \$10 billion complaint as an exercise in self-dealing.

U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams accused Trump and his lawyers in a scathing ruling of having manipulated the court system when he sued a federal agency under his control, bypassing a requirement that parties in a lawsuit must have adverse interests. The lawsuit ended in a settlement that granted the president immunity from tax audits and established a \$1.776 billion fund to compensate Trump allies who believe they have been unjustly persecuted.

The judge stopped short of explicitly voiding the deal shielding Trump from tax scrutiny but said the government cannot claim in official proceedings that the agreement was the result of a legitimate legal process.

"Whether Executive Branch actors can privately agree to give themselves and their former clients blanket immunities and billions of dollars in tax monies for legally undefined grievances was never an issue advanced to this Court," said Williams, an appointee of President Barack Obama. "The question is whether the Parties could do so by claiming to be adverse and engaging the legitimacy of a court proceeding. The answer is a resounding 'no.'"

The ruling comes just ahead of a key confirmation hearing

Though the practical impacts of the ruling may be limited since the lawsuit was voluntarily dismissed months ago and the administration has already abandoned the \$1.776 billion "Anti-Weaponization Fund" that came out of it, the order nonetheless amounts to a scathing rebuke and tees up a politically uncomfortable line of questioning for Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche as he faces the Senate Judiciary Committee for his confirmation hearing on Wednesday.

"The nature of the suit itself and the conduct of the Parties and counsel from its filing make plain that this was an attempt to use the Court to provide some legitimacy to an agreement to confer immunity to people and entities affiliated with the President and to earmark billions of dollars from American taxpayers to redress grievances not defined in the law," Williams wrote in her ruling.

She added: "Ensuring that our courts are used only for the express purpose created by the Constitution is the obligation of every judge and an obligation that this Court must discharge in light of the matter before it."

The \$10 billion suit against the IRS and Treasury Department in January accused the agencies of a failure to prevent a leak of the president's tax information to news outlets between 2018 and 2020.

In May, however, the administration announced that it was settling the case and creating a fund to compensate people who believe they've been mistreated by the criminal justice system. The fund was quickly shelved amid bipartisan backlash, though the Trump administration has said it intends to proceed with a separate element of the deal affording Trump and family members protection from tax audits.

From the start, the judge had appeared skeptical of the complaint and assigned a group of attorneys to determine whether there was a conflict in the case since, as sitting president, Trump was suing "entities whose decisions are subject to his direction."

Even after the settlement was revealed, she directed Trump attorneys to lay out their positions on whether the parties in the case were truly adverse to each other, whether the dismissal of the lawsuit

was premised on deception and whether the case should be reopened.

She made clear in her ruling that she was not satisfied by the lawyers' answers.

"After a review of the record, and the Parties' statements, the Court declines to adopt or accept the credulous exercise of divorcing President Trump's current job title from an understanding of what happened here," she wrote.

The ruling also raises the possibility of disciplinary actions

The judge referred Trump attorney Alejandro Brito, who filed the case, for possible disciplinary action before the state bar in Florida and said another lawyer, Daniel Epstein, will not be granted permission to file within the Southern District of Florida for up to a year.

A spokesman for the Trump legal team responded to a request seeking comment from Brito with a statement that blamed the IRS for allowing the president's tax returns to be leaked.

The judge also ordered that her ruling be sent to the state bars in New York and the District of Columbia, where ethics complaints have been filed against Blanche and Associate Attorney General Stanley Woodward.

Williams pointed to Blanche's congressional testimony in early June in which he revealed that the fund was no longer moving forward. Though nothing had been filed in court, Blanche appeared confident in his testimony that he "could speak for, and bind, both sides of this matter," Williams said.

"Acting Attorney General Blanche's apparent capacity to speak for both Plaintiffs and Defendants, sign a 'settlement' document on behalf of all Parties to this action, and then repudiate part of that agreement, demonstrates that there was only one party whose interests were being represented throughout this case," the judge wrote.

The judge also raised ethical concerns about Blanche and Woodward's involvement in the settlement given Blanche's past representation of Trump as well as Woodward's previous defense of Jan. 6 defendants and a co-defendant in Trump's classified documents case.

"Instead of either recusing because of their previous representations or vigorously defending this lawsuit as required to do so by DOJ policies and procedures, these lawyers agreed to a 'settlement' involving a staggering amount of money potentially benefitting former clients," she said.

Blanche denied in a CNN interview last spring that he had developed the settlement terms, saying, "The president has outside counsel, and their counsel, the Department of Justice, not me."

12 states challenge Paramount's takeover of Warner, say merger would 'extinguish competition'

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Twelve states sued to block Paramount's takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery on Monday, arguing that the \$81 billion merger would "extinguish competition" in Hollywood and lead to fewer choices for consumers across the U.S.

"Audiences on every sofa and in every movie (theater) seat would feel the impact of this unlawful merger," California Attorney General Rob Bonta, who is leading the case, said in a news conference from Los Angeles. He said the deal would result in higher prices, fewer movies and TV shows and lower quality of content overall.

A Paramount-Warner combo would bring together two of Hollywood's last five legacy studios. It would also mean putting Warner's HBO Max, libraries filled with fan favorites like "Harry Potter" and even CNN under the same roof of Paramount-owned CBS and the Paramount+ streaming service.

In Monday's complaint, the states said such a tie-up would also "inflict substantial harm" on movie theatres and basic cable distributors. Bonta's office said the states are asking Warner and Paramount to not close this merger "until after the judicial process concludes." And if the companies do not agree, the coalition would then file a temporary restraining order.

Paramount said Monday's lawsuit "distorts settled antitrust law" and maintained that its merger would instead create a "stronger competitor against dominant streaming and technology platforms who have harmed the market for theatrical exhibition and jobs in the entertainment industry."

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The company, which was bought by Skydance just last year, vowed to “vigorously defend” the transaction. Warner deferred to Paramount for comment. Beyond California, states joining Monday’s lawsuit include Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon and Washington.

Where Paramount’s takeover of Warner stands

Monday’s antitrust case arrives at a pivotal time for the Paramount-Warner transaction — which, after months of what became a very public bidding war with Netflix, received shareholders’ stamp of approval in April and then a blessing from President Donald Trump’s administration just last month.

The companies have hoped to close their deal sometime in the third quarter of this year, recently signaling an effort to complete the process in the coming weeks. The states’ lawsuit could throw a wrench in those plans, at least for now.

The clock is ticking. Paramount also pledged to give shareholders some compensation if that process isn’t complete by Sept. 30 — in the form of a 25-cent per share “ticking fee” for every quarter past that date. And it’s agreed to a regulatory termination fee of \$7 billion.

Beyond the U.S., Paramount has touted additional regulatory clearances it says it’s received in a handful of other countries, including China, Canada and Australia. Meanwhile, other reviews remain in progress, including in the European Union and the U.K. — which has separately suggested it may intervene.

Including debt, Paramount’s proposed purchase of Warner is valued at nearly \$111 billion (or \$31 per share) based on current outstanding shares.

Critics decry merger

Warner and Paramount argue that merging will be good for growth in the industry and give consumers access to more content, especially if HBO Max and Paramount+ libraries are combined. But critics have decried what further consolidation could mean in an industry already controlled by just a few major players.

Monday’s lawsuit from the states pointed to movies that make their way into theaters and the wider TV landscape — noting that a combined Paramount-Warner could control nearly a third of both the theatrical film distribution market as well as basic cable programming.

Such a combination would create “a massive company with unprecedented power and influence over news and entertainment across the globe,” said New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is among those challenging the deal. Beyond consumer impacts, she also said the merger would “put jobs and businesses nationwide at risk.”

Thousands of actors, directors, writers and other industry professionals have already voiced “unequivocal opposition” to the deal. Monday’s challenge garnered applause from groups like the Writers Guild of America, who warn that consolidation would result in “fewer jobs, lower wages for entertainment workers, less variety of programming, and higher prices for consumers”

Paramount argued on Monday that delaying the merger “will only harm entertainment workers who have already suffered over recent years as technology has disrupted their livelihood.”

The company added that the states’ case would “shield” larger streaming rivals like Netflix from meaningful competition.

Political questions

Throughout Paramount’s quest for Warner, questions of political influence have also piled up — with criticism falling largely along party lines in Washington. No Republicans signed on to the states’ case on Monday.

Democrats have long expressed skepticism about whether regulators working under Trump would scrutinize the deal as heavily. Several attorneys general joining Monday’s lawsuit took aim at the Justice Department’s decision to not challenge the deal — pointing in particular to the president’s close relationship with the billionaire family of Paramount CEO David Ellison.

“Something happened and perhaps that something had to do with a mega-billionaire named Ellison,” Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes told reporters on Monday. “We are seeing more and more instances where the Trump DOJ is just rolling over for corporate consolidation,” she added.

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Last month, DOJ leadership released a lengthy statement in support of the deal — maintaining a Paramount-Warner combo would “increase competition across the media and entertainment ecosystem, with benefits for American consumers and workers.” The Justice Department had maintained that politics would not play a role in its review.

Trump himself previously made public comments about Warner’s future, despite backpedaling on what he once suggested his personal role would be in approving a merger.

Many eyes are on CNN, a network that has long attracted ire from Trump and his allies.

Paramount’s CBS has already seen significant turmoil and shifts in editorial leadership since coming under Skydance ownership last year — and if Warner merger goes through, the reach of that could grow. Several Trump administration officials have also been far from shy from sharing their hopes for CNN under Paramount ownership, with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth telling reporters in March that “the sooner David Ellison takes over that network, the better.”

Oil prices jump following the latest fighting in the Middle East, while AI stocks sink

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices jumped Monday following a weekend of attacks in the Middle East, while more losses for computer chip companies and other winners of the artificial-intelligence boom dragged stock markets lower.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil, the international standard, climbed 9.6% to \$83.30 after the United States and Iran each said the Strait of Hormuz is under its control. Fighting in the region has kept oil tankers from using the strait to deliver crude to customers from the Persian Gulf, which drives up fuel prices worldwide.

The gains for oil prices accelerated immediately after President Donald Trump said he’s reinstating a blockade to prevent tankers carrying Iranian oil from using the strait. He also called for 20% payments on all cargo shipped through it to reimburse the United States for providing protection in the area.

Brent’s price, though, remains well below its wartime peak of nearly \$120 per barrel for its most actively traded contract.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 fell 0.8%, coming off its fourth winning week in the last five. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 138 points, or 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.6%.

Chip stocks like Micron Technology helped lead the way lower. Micron fell 4.4%, eating into what had been a stellar rise of 243.1% for the year so far.

Real profits are behind the rise because the AI rush has created surging demand for computer memory and other computing building blocks. But worries are rising that stock prices have shot too high and that the demand may not be sustainable if AI doesn’t deliver as much profit and productivity as expected.

Nvidia fell 3.5%. Because it’s the largest stock on Wall Street by value thanks to the euphoria around AI, it was the single heaviest weight on the S&P 500.

The day’s losses began in Asia, where South Korea’s Kospi index dropped 8.9%. That included a 15.4% plunge for SK Hynix’s stock in Seoul, the worst since it began trading in 1997.

The South Korean tech giant just launched shares of its stock trading in the United States on Friday, raising roughly \$26.5 billion. Those shares jumped 13.1% in their first day of trading, but they fell 9.3% Monday.

Other areas of the AI industry held up a bit better, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co.’s shares in Taiwan rose 1%. The chipmaker said its revenue in June soared nearly 68% from a year earlier, bringing its total revenue growth for the first half of the year to 35.6% from a year earlier.

But TSMC’s stock that trades in the United States fell 2.9% later in the day.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 60.06 points to 7,515.34. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 138.37 to 52,498.64, and the Nasdaq composite sank 408.43 to 25,873.18.

Much of Wall Street’s attention this week will be on profit reports from companies saying how much they earned during the spring. On Tuesday alone, Bank of America, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman

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Sachs and Wells Fargo are all releasing their latest quarterly results.

Analysts are forecasting that companies in the S&P 500 index will deliver overall growth of 23.6% from a year earlier, according to FactSet. If they're right, it would be the second straight quarter of growth better than 20%.

Companies across industries will need to deliver strong growth to justify the big moves their stock prices have made. Indexes are near records despite their sharp recent swings due to worries around AI stocks.

Companies usually turn in results that top analysts' expectations, including in 37 of the past 40 quarters, according to FactSet. If they do so again by the usual margin, earnings growth for S&P 500 companies in the latest quarter could end up being the best since 2021.

In the bond market, Treasury yields rose with the price of oil. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed to 4.61% from 4.56% late Friday and from just 3.97% before the war with Iran began.

Yields have risen worldwide 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 moved modestly in Europe.

In Asia, the swings were sharper, beyond South Korea's plunge. Stocks fell 2.1% in Shanghai, and Japan's Nikkei 225 dropped 1.9%

Ukraine and 9 other countries announce a coalition to protect Europe from ballistic missiles

By EMMA CARMICHAEL and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Ukraine and nine other countries announced Monday they were forming a coalition to protect Europe from ballistic missiles, utilizing Kyiv's experience in fighting Russia's full-scale invasion for over four years.

"Our goal is to build a shared ballistic missile defense capability for Europe," the 10 nations said in a statement in Paris at talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He was asking two dozen leaders for help in developing measures against Russia's missile attacks that have pummeled his country and made the rest of Europe wary of Moscow's wider ambitions on the continent.

Zelenskyy and the leaders of Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom said they recognized "the growing threat posed by ballistic missiles," which are harder to stop than cruise missiles or drones.

"We believe that protecting Europe requires a comprehensive solution, in the form of an integrated missile defense architecture, to deter and neutralize future missile threats," the statement said. "We recognize Ukraine's unique experience, gained through its defense against the war of aggression waged by Russia."

The statement gave no time frame for setting up the defense system and said the plan remained open to other countries.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine and its partners could, within the next 12 months, jointly develop a mass-produced, low-cost system with missiles that would let Europe supply itself with new antiballistic capability and provide it to others around the world who need protection.

Putin shows no sign Russia is backing down

Russian President Vladimir Putin was unyielding, vowing Monday emphatic retaliation to Kyiv's recent long-range attacks on refineries, tankers and terminals that have caused widespread fuel shortages.

"Wherever they attempt to strike Russian territory, we will respond in kind, but our strikes will be several times more powerful," Putin told a meeting with pro-Kremlin activists.

European foreign ministers were meeting separately in Brussels where they discussed Ukraine's needs and Russia's threats to the continent.

Zelenskyy is keen to accelerate efforts with European countries to develop its air defenses ahead of winter, when Russia usually intensifies its attacks to deny Ukrainians electricity, heat and water.

Ukrainian officials were in Paris to present a proposed Anti-Ballistic Program and meet with government

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leaders, national security advisers and defense companies who might take part, Zelenskyy said.

U.S. President Donald Trump's pledge last week to give Ukraine a license to produce Patriot air defense systems to counter the ballistic missiles could mark a major breakthrough for Kyiv. However, experts and Ukrainian officials warn that turning the idea into reality would probably take years. It was unclear how quickly a European system could be built.

Ukraine wants to push Putin into negotiations

Kyiv and its European backers want to press home Ukraine's recent successes and compel Putin to negotiate an end to the fighting, although Moscow has shown no willingness to compromise despite peace efforts by the Trump administration.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow will closely follow the Paris meeting but dismissed its aspirations.

"This is a coalition of warmongers," Peskov said. "They are driven by the profound delusion that it's possible to inflict a strategic defeat on our country, so this is a coalition of the deluded, a coalition of those who incite the war."

Ukraine's advances in drone technology have given it an edge recently, analysts and Western officials say. Its strikes on supply routes behind the front have robbed the Russian army of momentum and made its progress slow and costly, they say.

Ukraine says it hit 105 Russian vessels in 8 days

Ukrainian forces struck 105 Russian vessels in the Sea of Azov next to the Crimean Peninsula between July 6-13, said Robert Brovdi, commander of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces.

The vessels included tankers, dry cargo ships, a ferry and tugboats, Brovdi said on the Telegram messaging app.

The campaign is part of a broader Ukrainian effort to isolate the Crimean Peninsula, which is enduring its worst fuel crisis since it was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014, and disrupt Russian logistics. Crimea is a key rear base for Russian forces occupying parts of southern Ukraine.

It was not possible to independently verify the claims, and Russian officials made no immediate comment.

European leaders demonstrate their commitment to Kyiv

The Paris meeting of the so-called Coalition of the Willing, which brings together more than 30 countries and about 25 heads of state and government, appeared to be a demonstration of a long-term commitment to Ukraine and a warning to Russia, as Moscow tests Europe's resilience.

Zelenskyy's trip to the French capital followed the death of U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, one of Kyiv's staunchest supporters in Washington. Lawmaker Oleksandr Merezhko called Graham "the closest link between Ukraine, our president and Trump."

The trip also comes amid a major reshuffle of Zelenskyy's government that saw Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko step down Sunday.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said he would summon the Russian ambassador to France and impose sanctions against Russian hackers. He told BFMTV-RMC that the issue is about "a vast cyber campaign aimed at sabotage and espionage, carried out by Russia in about 10 European countries."

Ukraine's neighbors have also felt the war's impact.

In the latest incident, a drone launched during Russian overnight attacks on Ukraine's Odesa region crashed and exploded on Moldova's territory, Moldova's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Monday. It said the incident was "serious and unacceptable."

Ukraine fires over 300 drones toward Moscow

Ukraine has aimed at targets deep inside Russia with its domestically developed long-range drones and missiles.

Russian air defenses downed 350 Ukrainian drones heading toward Moscow since late Sunday, including 50 near the capital, the capital's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said.

Moscow regional Gov. Andrei Vorobyov said 81 Ukrainian drones were downed overnight, adding that three people were killed and three were injured by the attack in the Pionersky settlement in the western part of the Moscow region.

The Ukrainian air force, meanwhile, said Russia launched 134 long-range strike drones and three guided aviation missiles at Ukraine.

A strike on port infrastructure in Ukraine's Odesa region set fire to a docked merchant vessel carrying fertilizer under the flag of Togo, killing five crew members and wounding 10, said regional military administration head Oleh Kiper.

Russia says it thwarted a major Ukraine drone operation

Russia's Federal Security Service said it had thwarted a Ukrainian plan for a drone attack on the Ukrainka air base in the far eastern Amur region and the Shagol air base in the Chelyabinsk region in the southern Urals.

Small drones were smuggled into Russia's Bryansk region using air balloons and bigger transport drones, then taken by car near the air bases by Ukrainian agents, who were arrested, the security service said.

A covert Ukrainian operation a year ago, dubbed Operation Spiderweb, destroyed or damaged nearly a third of Moscow's strategic bomber fleet with drones carried secretly into Russia, according to Ukrainian officials.

Sam Neill, New Zealand actor who starred in 'Jurassic Park' and 'The Piano,' dies at 78

By MARK KENNEDY and CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Sam Neill, the smoothly elegant and versatile actor whose prolific career moved from art films to blockbusters as he dodged velociraptors in "Jurassic Park" and played Holly Hunter's cruel husband in "The Piano," has died. He was 78.

In 2023, Neill disclosed he had been diagnosed with angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma, a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. He died on Monday in Sydney, according to a statement posted to the actor's social media page.

His death was "sudden and unexpected," the statement said, adding that he "remained cancer free" when he died. A cause of death wasn't specified. "Sam was surrounded by family and passed with the dignity that has characterized his whole life," his family wrote.

Tributes were paid by fellow actors and directors, including Steven Spielberg, who helmed the first "Jurassic Park" movie.

"I adored making all the 'Jurassic' movies with him. Along with Laura Dern and Jeff Goldblum, we will always have our Jurassic family and Sam will never be forgotten by us or his many millions of fans around the world," Spielberg said in a statement.

Actor Sharon Lawrence wrote on Instagram: "Condolences and appreciation for the immense joy and mastery Sam Neill brought our industry."

Actor came to world's notice with 'Dead Calm' and 'My Brilliant Career'

Neill was one of a host of actors and directors who achieved international fame after an explosion of Australian films that began in the late 1970s, along with Paul Hogan, Mel Gibson, Geoffrey Rush, Russell Crowe, Jane Campion, Peter Weir and Gillian Armstrong. His range was remarkable, playing opposite Helena Bonham Carter in the Alan Ayckbourn comedy "Sweet Revenge" to chopping off Hunter's finger in "The Piano" to poking his own eyes out in the sci-fi horror "Event Horizon."

He portrayed both saintly and sinner: In "Omen III: The Final Conflict," he played Damien the Antichrist, and he also played Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in "The Tudors."

The actor first came to the attention of international audiences in Armstrong's 1979 film "My Brilliant Career," which also introduced Judy Davis. He later appeared in Phillip Noyce's "Dead Calm," a classy thriller set at sea and co-starring the then-relatively unknown Nicole Kidman.

Neill twice co-starred with Meryl Streep, in Australian director Fred Schepisi's "Plenty" and — again for Schepisi — in "A Cry in the Dark," a film about the sensationalized aftermath of a dingo killing a baby in the Australian Outback.

He earned an Emmy nomination for his performance in the title role of the 1998 miniseries "Merlin"

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and another as narrator of 2017's "Wild New Zealand." Neill also earned three Golden Globe nods — for "Merlin," "One Against the Wind" and "Reilly: Ace of Spies."

Richard E. Grant, a longtime friend who co-starred with Neill in 2019's "Palm Beach," described him in a post on Instagram as "an officer and a gentleman in the truest sense." Grant said Neill had "guided and helped me through a very difficult time in my life."

'Jurassic Park' was his best-known film

Perhaps Neill achieved his highest level of fame in "Jurassic Park," playing paleontologist Alan Grant, who is summoned to an island off Costa Rica where a theme park has been built to house herds of cloned dinosaurs.

His character was thoughtful and reasonable, a scientist who warned the mastermind of the theme park before the chaos: "Dinosaurs and man, two species separated by 65 million years of evolution have just been suddenly thrown back into the mix together. How can we possibly have the slightest idea what to expect?"

Grant survived the harrowing events when the creatures get loose, but didn't return for "The Lost World: Jurassic Park II" in 1997. He came back for the third episode in 2001 and "Jurassic World: Dominion" in 2022.

"It's probably a little late to learn these things," he told the New York Daily News in 2001, "but I finally feel I've worked out how to be an action hero. I'm happier with Grant this time. He's gnarly and grizzled, but he looks like he knows what he's doing."

Early life in Northern Ireland and New Zealand

Born in 1947 in Northern Ireland, Neill emigrated to New Zealand at the age of 7. He was born Nigel Neill, but told interviewers he started to go by Sam because there were too many Nigels at his school.

His family settled in Dunedin on the South Island and he was sent to boarding school in Christchurch. After college, he took the lead in "Sleeping Dogs" in 1977, the first feature made in New Zealand in more than a decade.

Neill's other film roles included playing a Soviet submarine officer who memorably dreams of a home in Montana in "The Hunt for Red October" and an investigator in director John Carpenter's "In the Mouth of Madness."

On the small screen, Neill played the malign Chester Campbell in TV's "Peaky Blinders" and Thomas Jefferson in the four-hour CBS miniseries, "Sally Hemings: an American Tragedy." On Apple TV+, he was on "Invasion," playing Oklahoma Sheriff John Bell Tyson, a man late in his career searching for his purpose. In 2024, he starred opposite Annette Bening in the Peacock series "Apples Never Fall."

Beloved in New Zealand as an unassuming celebrity

The actor became known in New Zealand as a modest and unassuming person who didn't embrace celebrity. On social media, he often posted images of his farm animals, many of them affectionately named after celebrities and friends, like Laura Dern the chicken, Kylie Minogue the duck and Helena Bonham Carter the cow.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon mourned Neill as "one of the greats" in a statement posted to social media.

"He started out when there was barely a film industry to speak of," Luxon wrote. "For more than fifty years he took New Zealand stories to the world and his talents helped make our film industry into what it is today."

Neill was also a vintner and under his Two Paddocks brand, he produced pinot noir and riesling wines from his winery in the Central Otago region of New Zealand's South Island.

His memoir "Did I Ever Tell You This?" came out in March 2023 and he was awarded a knighthood in recognition of his "outstanding contribution to film," a title approved by the late Queen Elizabeth II.

"I can't pretend that the last year hasn't had its dark moments," Neill told The Guardian in 2023, referring to his cancer diagnosis and treatment. "But those dark moments throw the light into sharp relief, you know, and have made me grateful for every day and immensely grateful for all my friends."

He is survived by his four children and eight grandchildren.

The next big races between moderates and progressives are in pivotal Midwestern states

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesotans are known for their niceness, but pleasantries are rare in the state's Democratic U.S. Senate primary.

The two leading candidates, U.S. Rep. Angie Craig and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, have clashed over electability, their ties to corporate interests and willingness to fight Republican President Donald Trump's administration in Washington. Millions of dollars in political ads have blanketed televisions and phone screens for a race that has become emblematic of Democrats' deeper divides.

The increasingly bitter contest will be among the next races where progressive candidates are facing more moderate rivals. August primaries in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota will be another gauge of Democratic voters' frustration with the establishment. The races across the Upper Midwest may also offer another test of the electability of hard-left candidates.

After notable progressive successes so far this year, party leaders worry these candidates could damage Democrats' brand and imperil their chances of retaking either chamber of Congress this fall or maintaining the governor's mansion in a battleground state ahead of the 2028 presidential election. The progressive left says recent results prove their message is the party's path to victory.

Flanagan, who is backed by progressive Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, last week convened a press conference to condemn "secretive dark money groups and special interests" she says are at work in the Minnesota race. She argued the groups are working to elect Craig, a more conventional Democrat backed by House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York and other senior Democratic leaders.

"What we are facing right now in our party," Flanagan told The Associated Press, "is the very folks who are standing in the way of the things that people need to be able to afford their lives, who are Democrats, are funded by these corporate special interests. That is the choice I think that we have, and people are onto it."

Craig counters that Flanagan raised campaign funds from major companies while chair of the Democratic Lieutenant Governors Association. She says that if Flanagan becomes the Democratic nominee, Republicans would focus on her ties to an ongoing fraud inquiry into the state's Medicaid programs.

"The coalition we're building is people in Minnesota who understand that in order to stop Donald Trump, we've got to win elections," Craig told the AP. She warned that Minnesota is often underappreciated as "the very definition of a swing state, and we simply can't take this U.S. Senate seat for granted."

Craig argued that it was important that Democrats do not reject corporate funding while Republicans continue to embrace backing from wealthy donors. She also said she supports major campaign finance reforms restricting the role of money in politics.

"But until we get to that day, it's naive to think that we're not going to need resources," Craig said.

Upper Midwest becomes next theater in Democrats' progressive vs. moderate fight

The Minnesota primary, in which Flanagan and Craig are vying for the seat vacated by Democratic Sen. Tina Smith, is Aug. 11. Wisconsin also holds its primary that day — one week after voters will choose nominees in Michigan on Aug. 4.

In Michigan, Rep. Haley Stevens is running against progressive Abdul El-Sayed for the state's Democratic Senate nomination in a race Democrats must win to hold the seat held by Sen. Gary Peters, who is retiring and has endorsed Stevens. And in Wisconsin, democratic socialist state Rep. Francesca Hong has surged in the state's Democratic gubernatorial primary against more conventional Democratic lawmakers, including former Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes and current Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez.

In each case, progressives hope to prove that an economically populist message resonates with voters beyond deep blue enclaves where they have had recent success, like New York City and Denver. But Democratic leaders fear that the insurgent candidates risk blowing winnable races for Democrats with messages considered too radical for most voters.

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Craig also criticized progressives for gambling with Democrats' chances to retake the Senate due to poor campaigning and vetting of candidates. She noted the recent downfall of Graham Platner, who easily won the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate in Maine in June but dropped out of the race last week after facing an allegation of sexual assault, which he denies.

"We just saw one of our best Senate opportunities go down in flames in Maine, potentially, with that same coalition," Craig said.

"And many of the same people are working on the lieutenant governor's campaign as Graham Platner's campaign," Craig added. "My coalition is statewide. I'm going everywhere. I'm talking to everyone. I'm working to bring people back to the (Democratic Party)."

Following the fallout from the Platner scandal, progressives view the Upper Midwest Senate races as their last chance to shape the Democrats' Senate caucus and prove their theory of the case in the mid-term elections.

"Abdul El-Sayed was already the most important primary candidate in the nation, and this underscores the importance of that race, both in the primary and the general," said Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, a political action committee that backs Flanagan and El-Sayed.

The organization views this year's Senate races in Michigan and Maine as key tests of whether progressives' message and organizing strategies could prove effective in competitive races. The high-stakes strategy was meant to assuage potential concerns among Democratic voters that progressives are unelectable in competitive races ahead of the party's 2028 presidential primary.

"Our hope is to not have an outlier but a pattern of shake-up-the-system economic fighters who win tough swing state elections," Green said.

A long populist history in the Midwest

The Upper Midwest has populist traditions going back decades, including by electing progressive and conservative populists, said Steven Schier, a political science professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. The region was often a model for the Progressive Era's reform-minded policies, but it also elected some of the most stridently conservative Cold War voices like Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.

"What's interesting about the Upper Midwest is that you get well-developed and articulated left populism, and well-developed and articulated right populism in competition and combat. It produces some very lively election seasons," Schier said.

More recently, the Great Lakes region has been the nation's marquee political battleground, with state legislatures and the presidential winner swinging between Democratic and Republican candidates for the last decade. No matter who wins, the results of the midterm primaries in the region will have major ripple effects in national politics.

"This culture will take broad concerns that populists bring up and trumpet them throughout the electoral system, and that's true on both the right and the left up here," Schier said.

Support for Israel isn't a high priority for younger Jewish Americans, an AP-NORC poll finds

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

Support for Israel is a key component of the religious identity of many Jewish adults ages 45 and older in the United States, but younger Jewish adults are more likely to prioritize other forms of connection, like celebrating Jewish holidays, according to a new AP-NORC poll.

That suggests the generational divide on Israel's actions since the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war in Gaza extends beyond politics to religious identity.

"I pray for people in the land of Israel. I don't need to pray for the state," said Cameron Bernstein, a 27-year-old medical student in New Orleans. She was raised with strong ties to Israel, where she celebrated her bat mitzvah, but said that now "it doesn't play a role in my life, more than another country with people I love."

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The survey of 1,022 Jewish adults from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that this split on support for Israel is particularly apparent among adults like her who identify as religiously Jewish. Jewish adults who are religiously unaffiliated but identify as Jewish in other ways tend to have less of an emotional connection to Israel in general.

Among the religiously Jewish adults — who make up 68% of Jewish adults overall — about 6 in 10 say that being Jewish is “extremely” or “very” important in their life, regardless of their age.

But about half of older religious Jewish adults say that supporting Israel is “extremely” or “very” important for their Jewish identity, similar to the percentage who say that about celebrating Jewish holidays. By contrast, only about 4 in 10 younger religious Jewish adults emphasize support for Israel, while about 7 in 10 say celebrating Jewish holidays is highly important.

Susan Boyer, 72, from Southern California, equates supporting Israel with supporting the right of the Jewish people to have a homeland in the Middle East.

Like many other Jewish Americans, the retiree believes Israel is an essential refuge against the possible repetition of large-scale massacres of Jewish people, like the Holocaust, especially as concern about antisemitism rises among Jewish adults.

“I’ve been defending myself as a Jew since I was a child ... getting mugged by girls in my classes for being a Jew,” Boyer said. “It’s invasive into your daily living that you have to constantly, constantly be defending yourself as a Jew, constantly making sure that nobody is redefining you or nobody is like insulting your land.”

To Ari Pollack, a 30-year-old arts fundraiser in Wisconsin, Israel’s military operations — especially in the last few years — provide fodder for antisemitism and thus make everywhere less safe for Jews.

“I’m personally pretty opposed to basically everything Israel’s doing these days,” said Pollack, who grew up attending religious school. “A source of a lot of frustration that I have for the Jewish establishment is that sort of dogmatic teaching of pro-Israel ideas that I’ve had to unlearn as an adult. And it’s part of what’s kept me away from, you know, attending regular synagogue services.”

Like about 3 in 10 religious Jewish adults under 45, Pollack says that Israel has committed genocide during the war in Gaza, a charge that Israel has vehemently denied. That’s compared with about 2 in 10 Jewish adults ages 45 and older.

The poll suggests that other elements of Judaism remain important to many younger Jewish adults. Americans under 45 who identify as religiously Jewish are more likely than older Jewish adults to say that marking or celebrating Shabbat or avoiding certain foods, like pork or shellfish, are highly important to their Jewish identity.

Phoebe Wapnitsky, a 32-year-old in Connecticut, also strongly opposes Israel’s military actions, which she perceives as unaligned with Jewish values.

“Standing against oppression, promoting social justice — those are the roles that Judaism plays in my life,” she said, adding that she felt disconnected from Israel even before the Oct. 7 attack.

Brian Ebarb, a 47-year-old attorney in Louisiana, also says his Jewish identity was about “action and community” — but those include supporting Israel.

“When the government makes mistakes, it should be criticized,” he said, but added that shouldn’t become an excuse for attacking an entire people. “The existence of the state of Israel is so precarious that we have to be careful and not allow criticism of Israel to become criticism of Jews worldwide.”

Today in History: July 14, the storming of the Bastille

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, July 14, the 195th day of 2026. There are 170 days left in the year.

Today in History: On July 14, 1789, in an event symbolizing the start of the French Revolution, citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille prison and released the seven prisoners held there.

Also on this date:

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In 1798, Congress passed the Sedition Act, making it a federal crime to publish false, scandalous or malicious writing about the United States government.

In 1881, outlaw William H. Bonney Jr., alias "Billy the Kid," was shot and killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett in Fort Sumner in present-day New Mexico.

In 1912, American folk singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie was born in Okemah, Oklahoma.

In 1933, all German political parties, except the Nazi Party, were outlawed by the government of Nazi Germany.

In 1945, Italy formally declared war on Japan, its former Axis partner during World War II.

In 1960, 26-year-old Jane Goodall first arrived at the Gombe Stream Reserve in present-day Tanzania to begin her study of the wild chimpanzees living there.

In 2004, the Senate scuttled a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. (Forty-eight senators voted to advance the measure — 12 short of the 60 needed — and 50 voted to block it.)

In 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff arrived at the Butner Federal Correctional Complex in North Carolina to begin serving a 150-year sentence for his massive Ponzi scheme. (Madoff died in prison in April 2021.)

In 2013, thousands of demonstrators across the U.S. protested a Florida jury's decision one day earlier to clear George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin.

In 2015, world powers and Iran struck a deal to curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from international sanctions.

In 2016, terror struck Bastille Day celebrations in the French Riviera city of Nice as a large truck plowed into a festive crowd, killing 86 people in an attack claimed by Islamic State extremists; the driver was shot dead by police.

In 2020, researchers reported that the first COVID-19 vaccine tested in the U.S. boosted people's immune systems as scientists had hoped; the vaccine was developed by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc.

In 2022, the National Galleries of Scotland said a previously unknown self-portrait of Vincent Van Gogh was discovered behind another of the artist's paintings when experts took an X-ray of the canvas ahead of an upcoming exhibition.

Today's Birthdays: Former football player and actor Rosey Grier is 94. Actor Vincent Pastore (TV "The Sopranos") is 80. Music company executive Tommy Mottola (muh-TOH'-luh) is 78. Movie producer Scott Rudin is 68. Singer-songwriter Anjelique Kidjo is 66. Singer-guitarist Kyle Gass (Tenacious D) is 66. Actor Jane Lynch is 66. Actor Jackie Earle Haley is 65. Actor Matthew Fox is 60. Rock singer-musician Tanya Donnelly is 60. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Ross Rebagliati is 55. Country singer Jamey Johnson is 51. Hip-hop musician Taboo (Black Eyed Peas) is 51. Actor/writer/producer Phoebe Waller-Bridge is 41. Rock singer Dan Reynolds (Imagine Dragons) is 39. MMA fighter Conor McGregor is 38.