

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 1 of 73

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)

[4- Senior Legion Team is state bound!](#)

[6- Dacotah Bank Taco Ad](#)

[7- Brown County Fair Ad](#)

[8- Dairy Queen Ad](#)

[9- U14 State Tournament Pairings](#)

[10- Tvinnereim is new Groton Area Maintenance](#)

[Director](#)

[11- SD SearchLight: Universities ask for \\$24.5 million to launch and maintain artificial intelligence system](#)

[12- SD SearchLight: Billionaire-funded national group seeks to influence voters in South Dakota runoff election](#)

[13- SD SearchLight: 'E pluribus unum' is not a slogan. It's a choice.](#)

[15- SD SearchLight: GOP gov's join Trump pledge designed to shield ratepayers from data center costs](#)

[16- SD SearchLight: US House and Senate split on ending Trump's war in Iran, as gas prices rise](#)

[17- SD SearchLight: USDA reversal on crop insurance change welcomed by farm groups](#)

[19- Weather Pages](#)

[25- Daily Devotional](#)

[26- Subscription Form](#)

[27- Lottery Numbers](#)

[28- News from the Associated Press](#)

Community Calendar

Friday, July 24

Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, baked potato, California blend, fruit.

State B Legion 14U at Vermillion

10U Baseball State at Hartford/Beresford

Saturday, July 25

Sunday, July 26

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

© 2026 Groton Daily Independent



Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 2 of 73

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.

Back to Hall H

Comic-Con International 2026 has kicked off in San Diego, bringing four days of studio announcements, celebrity panels, and fan events to one of the world's largest pop culture conventions. More than 135,000 attendees are expected through Sunday.

Founded in 1970 as a gathering of about 100 comic book fans in a hotel basement, Comic-Con now spans nearly 500,000 square feet of exhibit space and features more than 1,000 exhibitors and roughly 2,000 hours of programming, generating an estimated \$160M for the local economy (watch how it evolved). Much of the action centers on Hall H, the convention's famed 6,500-seat venue for the biggest studio reveals, where fans often begin lining up two days in advance to secure a spot.

Marvel and DC Studios return to Hall H after both skipped last year's convention. Today's schedule includes a panel for "Spaceballs: The New One," a sequel that reunites original cast members with 100-year-old Mel Brooks nearly four decades after the original film. See Johnny Depp make an appearance as Ebenezer Scrooge and the complete schedule.

Sky-High Oil

Global oil prices topped \$100 per barrel for the first time since May yesterday. The milestone came after Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels said they attacked two Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, where they recently announced a blockade.

The war now centers on the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, through which 12% to 15% of global maritime trade—and 7% of the world's oil—passes (see map). Saudi Arabia can reroute some oil northward through the Suez Canal, but that route slows shipping to Asia by 10 to 15 days or more, and requires supertankers to reduce their oil capacity. With a new trade route threatened, President Donald Trump says he is weighing a "major military punishment" against Iran. Explore US gas prices [here](#) (w/map).

Separately, Congress was split yesterday on whether to end the Iran war: Four House Republicans joined Democrats to pass a nonbinding resolution while Senate Republicans blocked a binding measure.

Orcas Just Wanna Have Fun

Researchers this week published footage of orcas ramming into giant fish so forcefully that the prey explodes into tiny fragments. They believe the well-coordinated tactic may help younger orcas feed—or simply serve as entertainment.

Two separate encounters in the Gulf of California show one adult orca holding a dead sunfish in its mouth while another adult accelerates toward it. The fish is released just before the second orca strikes, sending pieces flying (watch [here](#)). Weighing up to 4,400 pounds, sunfish are among the world's largest fish and common prey for orcas, which can weigh up to 22,000 pounds. In both videos, younger orcas feed on the debris, suggesting the adults may be breaking the fish into bite-sized pieces for juveniles.

Scientists say the tactic could also just be a game. Orcas are known to do things that don't seem to serve practical purposes, like balancing dead salmon on their heads and swarming tourist boats.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 3 of 73

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Critics Choice Association establishes Creator Awards, honoring people in the digital space with categories including best podcast host, best health/wellness creator, and best business series; inaugural ceremony is set for April 15.

Venice Film Festival unveils full 2026 lineup, including a four-hour Elon Musk documentary, a dark comedy from Martin McDonagh about the CIA, and an A24 psychological thriller starring Robert Pattinson.

Amazon adds video games to Prime Video platform in a push to establish itself as a front-runner in the industry.

Global video game industry hit a record high of \$201.6B in revenue last year.

Science & Technology

Food and Drug Administration advisory panel votes 8-6 to expand access to peptide BPC-157, which some claim helps heal injuries and reduce inflammation; it is one of seven peptides under review this week.

OpenAI makes ChatGPT Health available on all US-based plans, allowing users over age 18 to feed health app data into the AI chatbot.

... and a Florida man sues OpenAI for giving him potentially life-threatening medical advice.

Single-dose of immunosuppressive drug temporarily reverses autism-like brain changes in adult mice; while potentially too toxic for human use, the drug suggests autism-related neurological traits may still be treatable in adulthood.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.2%, Dow -1.0%, Nasdaq -2.2%) over Iran concerns, tech stock sell-off.

President Donald Trump announces 10% to 12.5% tariffs on dozens of countries, replacing expiring duties.

US weekly jobless claims drop to 187,000 last week; figure is the fewest since September 1969.

Mortgage rates rise to 6.58% for 30-year fixed loans, the highest level in nearly 12 months (More, w/chart)

European Union fines Google \$1B for violating the bloc's Digital Markets Act and undercutting competition by using its app store and internet search engine to funnel users toward its products.

Politics & World Affairs

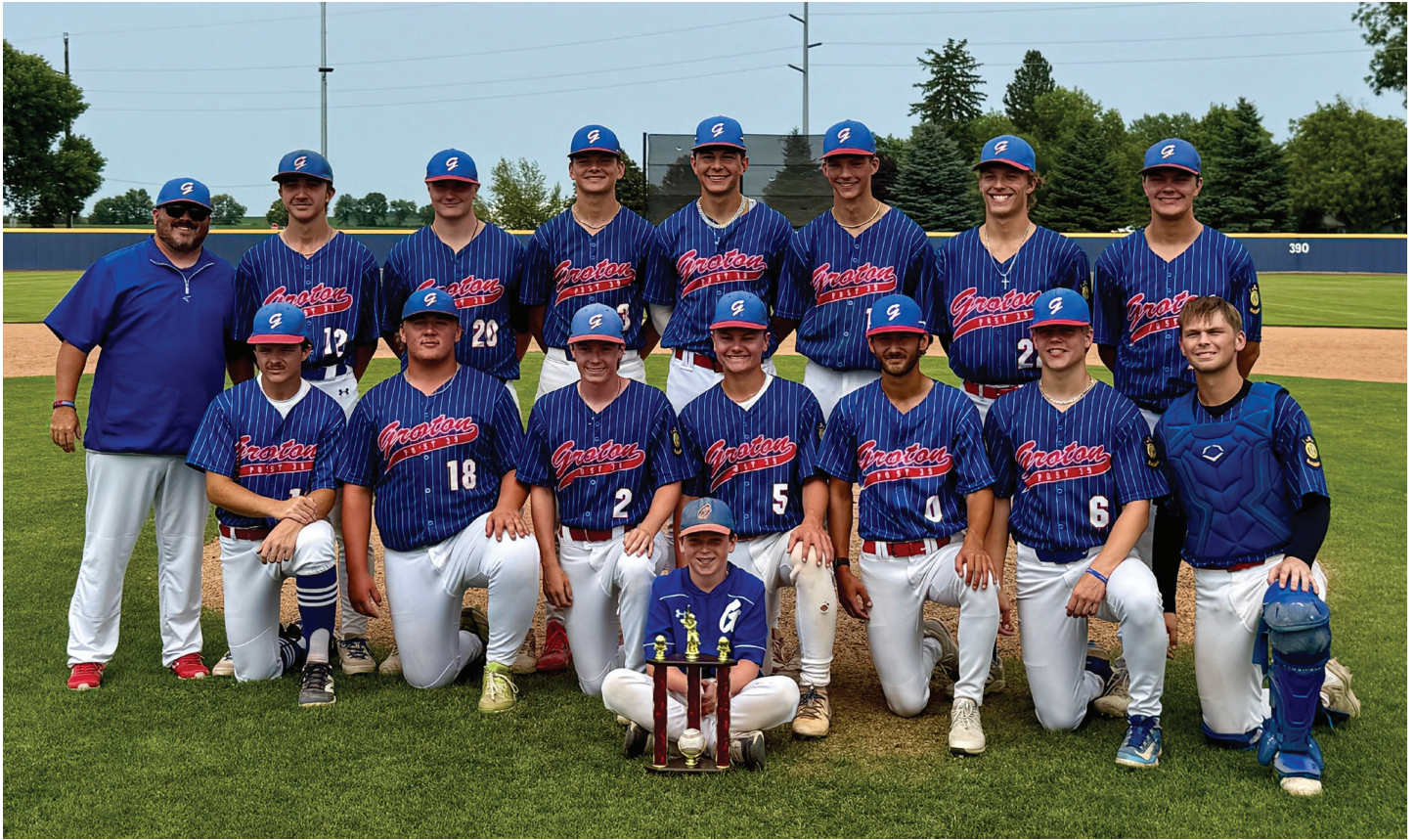
President Donald Trump adds stipulation to US-Saudi nuclear deal announced this week, saying it is conditional on the kingdom normalizing relations with Israel.

Man who killed Minnesota lawmaker Melissa Hortman (D) and her husband last year is sentenced to two life terms plus 40 years in prison.

Justice Department drops subpoenas to New York Times reporters over an article highlighting security concerns about Qatar's Air Force One gift.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 4 of 73



Senior Legion Team is state bound!

Back Row: Coach Pat Krause, Kason Oswald, Isaiah Scepaniak, TC Schuster, Carter Simon, Jordan Schwan, Braeden Flihs

Front Row: Nicholas Groeblichhoff, Gavin Englund, Lincoln Krause, Alex Abeln, Jarrett Erdmann, Ryder Schelle, Karsten Flihs, Bat Boy Micah Krause in front with trophy. (Courtesy photo

Bruce Babcock)

The victorious Groton American Senior Legion team wins its Senior Legion B Regional tournament in the championship game with a 2-1 win over Sisseton. Now they are on their way to the State Senior Legion B Tournament next week in Madison.

Groton Daily Independent

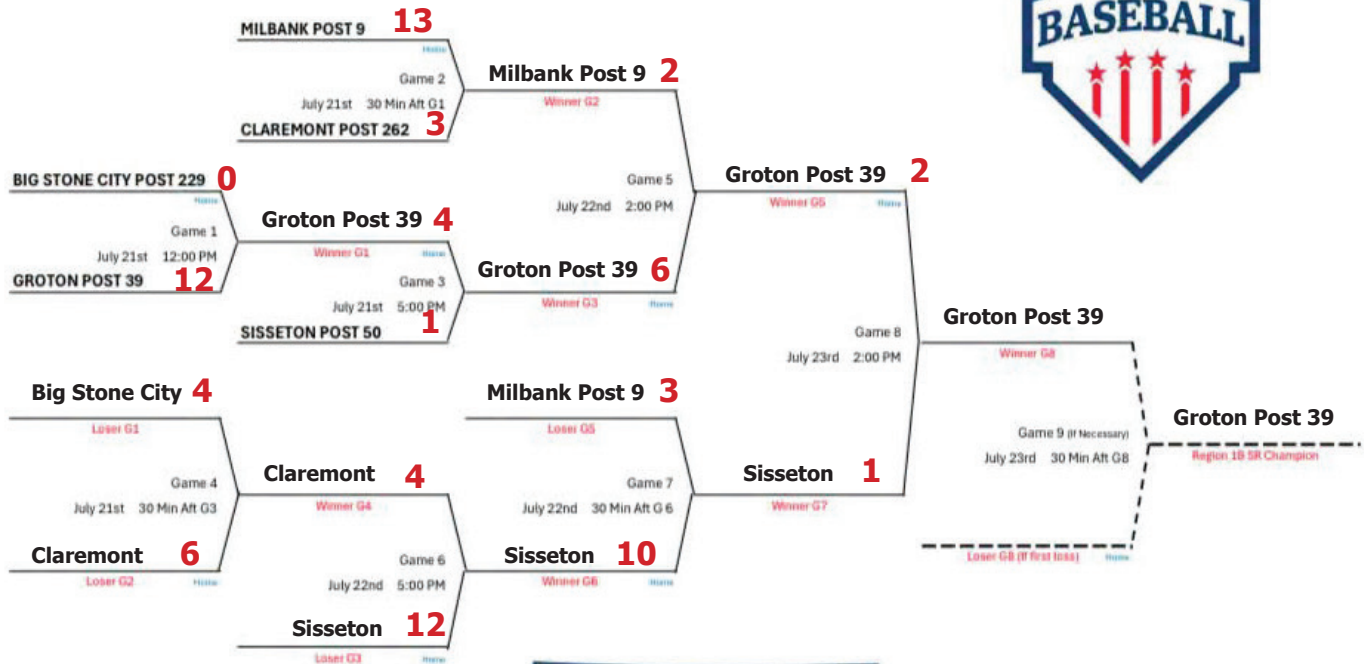
Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 5 of 73

SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION "B" SENIOR BASEBALL

REGION 1B

MILBANK LEGION POST 9, MILBANK, SD

JULY 21ST - JULY 23RD, 2026



As of 7/7/2026

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 6 of 73

Runs Hard To Come By In Groton Legion Post 39 Win over Sisseton By GameChanger Media

Both teams were strong on the mound on Thursday, but Groton Legion Post 39 defeated Sisseton Post 50 Sr Legion 2-1. Gavin Englund started the game for Groton Legion Post 39 and recorded 17 outs.

A walk by Lincoln Krause put Groton Legion Post 39 on the board in the bottom of the second.

Groton Legion Post 39 added one run in the third after Englund grounded out.

Englund led things off on the mound for Groton Legion Post 39. The pitcher surrendered five hits and one run over five and two-thirds innings, striking out seven and walking three. LJ Crooks began the game for Sisseton Post 50 Sr Legion. The hurler allowed four hits and two runs over six innings, striking out seven and walking six. Braeden Fliehs threw one and one-third innings of scoreless ball for Groton Legion Post 39 in relief. The reliever gave up zero hits, striking out one and walking two.

TC Schuster, Englund, Carter Simon, and Fliehs each collected one hit for Groton Legion Post 39. Krause and Englund each drove in one run for Groton Legion Post 39. Karsten Fliehs led Groton Legion Post 39 with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting six walks for the game.

Crooks went 1-for-3 at the plate and led the team with one run batted in. Kellen Rempp led Sisseton Post 50 Sr Legion with two hits in four at bats. Sisseton Post 50 Sr Legion were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Rempp had the most chances in the field with seven.



BROWN COUNTY FAIR

GETTIN'
ROWDY
IN THE STIX



ABERDEEN, SD

AUGUST 10-16, 2026

TICKETS ON
SALE NOW!



Follow the QR code
for more info!

browncountysdfair.com

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 8 of 73



Children's
Miracle Network
Hospitals



Treat your team.
Help local kids.



BUY A BLIZZARD®
MAKE A *Miracle!*



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



We're celebrating
Miracle Treat Day®
at the DQ® restaurant
11 East Hwy 12
Groton, SD



All the proceeds from every
Blizzard® Treat sold on Miracle
Treat Day® will be donated to
Children's Miracle Network Hospitals
to support Sanford Children's Hospital.

IT'S A WIN-WIN!



Boost team morale
with a sweet treat



Support an amazing cause
right here in our community

PLAN AHEAD & SAVE!

Pre-order Blizzard® Treats
for your team!



Email your order to
grotondq@nvc.net
by 6 PM on Tuesday, July 28th



Blizzard® Treat coupons
available in Groton!



THANK YOU FOR HELPING DQ® BRING SMILES TO
LOCAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RECEIVING CARE!



See you on July 30!



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 9 of 73

2026 South Dakota American Legion State Class "B" 14U Baseball Tournament

South Dakota American Legion
State Class "B" 14U Baseball Tournament
Prentis Park Baseball Field, Vermillion, SD
Hosted by Vermillion Post 1
July 24th - July 26th, 2026

DELL RAPIDS POST 65

Region 5B Champ

July 24th Game 1
11:00 AM

GROTON POST 39

Region 1B Champ

WINNER/COLOME POST 169

Region 7B Champ

July 24th Game 2
30 Min After G1

S/M/F/C POST 152

Region 4B Champ

ELK POINT POST 134

Region 3B Champ

July 24th Game 3
30 Min After G2

LENNOX POST 174

Region 6B Champ

MADISON POST 25

Region 2B Champ

July 24th Game 4
7:00 PM

VERMILLION POST 1

Host

There will be an opening
ceremony between games 2
and 3.



Winner G1
July 25th Game 7
30 Min After G6

Winner G2

Winner G3

July 25th Game 8
30 Min After G7

Winner G4

Loser G1
July 25th Game 5
11:00 AM

Loser G2

Loser G3
July 25th Game 6
30 Min After G5

Loser G4

Winner G7

July 26th Game 11
30 Min After Game 10

Winner G8

Loser G7
July 26th Game 10
30 Min After G9

Loser G8

Winner G5

July 26th Game 9
10:00 AM

Winner G6



Champion

3rd Place

5th Place

Tournament MVP:

Big Stick Award:

Porter T. Talcott Sportsmanship Award:

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 10 of 73

Tvinnereim is new Groton Area Maintenance Director

Aaron Tvinnereim, originally from Webster, is the new Maintenance Director for the Groton Area School District.

"We live in Aberdeen and have a son and a daughter," he said. "My wife Alison is the elementary librarian at the Groton Elementary School and also works as a para."

"Becoming the Maintenance Director is new to me," Tvinnereim admitted. "Before accepting this job, I had been in the military with the National Guard for 29 years."

"I have several things to learn about this job, but the biggest challenge is simply learning everything that needs to be done," he admitted. "Superintendent Schwan and the other maintenance workers are a great help!"

"Part of the learning process involves not being afraid to ask questions and seeking advice from the staff about what has to be done in this summer 'clean everything' work!" Tvinnereim smiled.

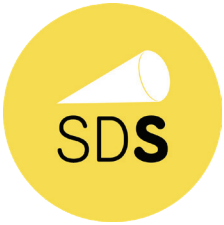
"I've only been on the job for five days so am still a novice," he admitted. "I'm not afraid to ask for ideas and suggestions from the staff. I've learned one thing already: the work is time-consuming and requires physical skill and ability."

"For example, just stripping and cleaning the floors and hallways in both buildings is quite the process," Tvinnereim explained. "The floors must be stripped and thoroughly cleaned, allowed to dry completely, and followed by numerous coats of wax!"

"There are seven employees in the school maintenance department," he said, "which includes some of the teaching staff who help out in the summer. These individuals are great help since they've been here several years and know what needs to be done."



The Tvinnereim family



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Universities ask for \$24.5 million to launch and maintain artificial intelligence system

Board seeks another \$36 million to start national defense center and repair and construct buildings

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

The board that oversees South Dakota's public universities plans to ask state lawmakers for nearly \$60.5 million for building projects and maintenance, the launch of a national defense center in Rapid City, and technology upgrades related to artificial intelligence.

The Board of Regents also endorsed construction funding requests Thursday during a meeting in Spearfish, including funding to begin the previously announced move of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine to Sioux Falls.

Board member Pam Roberts said the requests are an "investment in South Dakota's future."

"It helps keep us affordable, it helps with workforce development and makes sure that we're responsive to all the needs of South Dakota," Roberts said.

Gov. Larry Rhoden will take up the requests later this year and decide whether to include them in his fiscal year 2028 budget proposal ahead of the legislative session, which begins in January.

Funding for artificial intelligence

As the board plans to use artificial intelligence in its business and educational operations, it's requesting \$20 million in one-time funding to build out its AI technology system and \$4.5 million in ongoing funding to maintain it.

The board approved a new AI policy at its Thursday meeting, and the board will launch a system-wide software this fall that supports several AI uses and future emerging technologies, said David Overby, interim system chief information officer.

"This policy provides a way to enable AI innovation across the regental system while maintaining clear boundaries around data protection, security, oversight and accountability," Overby said. "It supports responsible adoption without treating AI as unmanaged or standalone technology."

The board also approved four AI academic programs on Thursday: a doctorate in AI at Dakota State University and bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in artificial intelligence engineering at South Dakota State University.

The \$4.5 million additional ongoing request would be used to maintain the AI infrastructure by replacing aging equipment, building out technology infrastructure and funding cybersecurity needs. South Dakota State University President Barry Dunn said AI is increasingly used at universities across the nation.

"This opportunity is not simply to make AI tools available, but to use AI responsibly to improve service efficiency, accessibility and decision-making across the regental system," Dunn said.

The ongoing funding request is essential, said Northern State University President Alan LaFave.

"Core technology is now core infrastructure," LaFave said. "It has to be maintained, replaced and funded on a predictable cycle just like buildings, utilities and other essential campus systems."

The regents plan to use another \$1.6 million annually from student tuition fees to support the technology updates.

Launching a national defense center

Several university presidents spoke in support of a \$1 million request to launch a Center for National

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 12 of 73

Defense in Rapid City, which aligns with Gov. Rhoden's creation of the South Dakota Defense Institute in April. The center will require seven full-time workers.

The defense industry is one of the "fastest growing sectors in our state's economy," Black Hills State University President Steve Elliott said.

The center will develop the workforce needed for defense acquisition, systems engineering and emerging defense technologies, among other needs, Elliott added.

Elliott said the collaboration would offer students work-based learning projects, internships and fellowships with nearby Ellsworth Air Force Base, the South Dakota National Guard, defense contractors and government agencies in the area.

Dakota State University President John Ballard said he's spent "most of my life in this area." He attended the United States Naval Academy, served in faculty and administrative roles at several military and defense colleges, and served as president of the National Intelligence University in Washington, D.C., where he led technology integration across the intelligence community.

"I can tell you with a great deal of certainty that programs like this are not only highly productive but also highly beneficial to the people that they're designed to serve," Ballard said.

Return to building maintenance goals

The board sets an annual goal to fund campus maintenance needs at 2% of the total replacement cost for campus buildings. For fiscal year 2028, that would be \$18.78 million.

Last year, lawmakers underfunded the maintenance request, which board member Roberts called "short-sighted and disappointing" at the time.

Sheila Gestring, University of South Dakota president, said university buildings are among the state's "most valuable public assets" because they support economic and workforce development.

"When maintenance is deferred, costs don't disappear, they grow," Gestring said.

The fiscal year 2028 request is about \$1.65 million more than fiscal year 2027's request.

Capital project requests

Gestring requested \$6.2 million to begin relocating the Sanford School of Medicine from Vermillion to Sioux Falls. The relocation includes moving instructional, office and faculty space, and an anatomy lab temporarily to existing buildings on the Sanford Health campus in central Sioux Falls.

The university plans to build a new Sioux Falls facility within the next decade, costing about \$150 million. Gestring told South Dakota Searchlight in an interview last year that she hopes most of the funding will come from donors.

Dunn requested \$10 million to construct a new building to house SDSU's business and economics programs. The programs' enrollment grew from 730 students in 2018 to 1,300 in 2025, and is expected to reach 1,500 in 2030.

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.

Billionaire-funded national group seeks to influence voters in South Dakota runoff election

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

Some of the political postcards mailed to South Dakota voters in the week ahead of Tuesday's runoff election for the Republican nomination for governor are financed by a national group that received all of its recent contributions from a Pennsylvania billionaire.

Federal Election Commission records show that the School Freedom Fund political action committee has raised \$15 million since last year from billionaire and Republican mega-donor Jeffrey Yass, whose net worth is an estimated \$67.4 billion. Yass is an investment trading firm owner, TikTok investor and advocate of

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 13 of 73

school-choice options, including public funding to help children attend private schools.

School Freedom Fund is a type of political action committee known as a super PAC, which can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money as long as it doesn't coordinate with candidates.

School Freedom Fund's treasurer, Adam Rozanzky, did not immediately respond to a Searchlight message asking about the group's motivation for getting involved in a South Dakota campaign.

Despite School Freedom Fund's name, two postcards it sent to South Dakota voters do not mention schools or education. Instead, they characterize Gov. Larry Rhoden as a "big taxin'" politician for several actions throughout his career as governor and previously as a legislator, without providing context.

The postcards say, for example, that Rhoden "raised our sales taxes three times."

Rhoden did sign three sales tax bills into law earlier this year. One uses revenue from a previously scheduled increase in the state sales tax rate to lower the school-imposed portion of homeowner property taxes, another creates an optional county sales tax to be applied toward homeowner property tax reduction, and the third creates an optional sales tax that cities can use temporarily to fund special projects such as building an arena.

Rhoden faces Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden in Tuesday's runoff election. The winner will advance to the Nov. 3 general election to face Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers.

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.

COMMENTARY

'E pluribus unum' is not a slogan. It's a choice.

by Tim Storey and Sue Urahn

Like two sides of a coin imprinted with the nation's motto, "e pluribus unum" — out of many, one — America's political factions are cast in opposition, but they are intrinsically bound together as parts of a larger whole.

From the beginning, the United States has aspired to build a more perfect union. When our founders convened the Constitutional Convention in 1787, they disagreed about the structure of government, the balance of power and the protection of individual versus collective rights. But when they debated — and they often did, with great conviction and intensity — they honed their arguments on what they thought was best for the entire country, guided by the shared vision of a new nation established on the ideals of individual freedom, equality and opportunity.

Today, that shared commitment to America's founding creed is under strain.

Most Americans feel exhausted by politics, and a growing number are unhappy with the way the political system is working. Worse, this unhappiness is showing up in unhealthy ways, with low trust in government and each other — a sense that the other side is the problem.

We are painfully aware that partisanship and distrust have grown. We see this too often, when people are reduced to disparaging labels, states are cast as simply red or blue, and the hostility in our politics produces no progress, leaving us all no better off, or worse than before. Our political parties appear deadlocked in a struggle for power, forgetting that they are inseparable sides of the nation's democratic system, which depends not on who wins but on a shared commitment to the common good. Central to that commitment is a willingness to listen to opposing views, not simply to respond but to understand.

Disagreeing is one thing — it is rooted in our pluralist republic. But when we cannot find ways to work together, it becomes impossible to solve our problems. The founders understood this. They argued passionately, but they shared a deeper allegiance to the nation's success and its posterity, and they were partners in creating and safeguarding a system that we all continue to rely on.

Whether we choose to engage in political warfare or civil debate is up to each of us. That's as true in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 14 of 73

statehouses and city councils as it is at the family dinner table, in the community center, on the debate stage, or standing on opposite sides of a free speech zone. In each of these venues, we can choose to practice democracy by engaging in debate that is spirited, healthy and rooted in strong arguments rather than name calling — or worse, heeding the impulse to withdraw from political engagement altogether.

There are glimmers of hope.

Here in Chicago, as part of the nation's largest public policy gathering of state legislators and staff from all 50 states and U.S. territories, our organizations, the National Conference of State Legislatures and The Pew Charitable Trusts, are working together to build connections across the political spectrum and share policy ideas and best practices that strengthen legislatures and serve communities nationwide. This follows a series of events held around the country, including a February "America at 250 Forum," to bring people with opposing views together to discuss issues that matter to everyone. All of the events demonstrate a serious commitment to strengthening our democratic muscles at this historic moment for the country.

Legislators from different parties sitting together to discuss not only their politics but also their human connection and shared belief in the country demonstrates that, despite the spotlight on our divisions, the time is ripe to unite for a common cause. We need to see more unity from our leaders — and be willing to try it ourselves.

Today, Americans must recognize that our political differences are not inevitably divisive, because our futures are fundamentally connected. Politics are difficult, yes, but they do not need to be ugly. Finding common ground is welcome, but at a minimum, Americans need to find the space to connect with one another and the courage to engage in healthy and substantive discussion. We can do that by building up state and local institutions where individuals get to know each other personally and by overcoming the silos and sides we've allowed to define us. A far better approach is to deal with people face-to-face and with respect, even when we profoundly disagree.

In a time when polarization and mistrust are treated as inevitable, we encourage all Americans to recommit to the principles and institutions that bind us together: a common belief in individual rights and equality, the rule of law, the legitimacy of representative democracy and our shared pursuit of national prosperity.

As America honors its 250th anniversary, it's important to say, unequivocally and collectively, that we're grateful to our country's founders for starting this great experiment. We care about each other, and we want our fellow citizens to be successful. And we are proud to be part of this diverse, complicated and hopeful country.

Shared beliefs like these are central to the American experiment. E pluribus unum — out of many, one — if we so choose.

Tim Storey is the CEO of the National Conference of State Legislatures. Sue K. Urahn is the president and CEO of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

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

Tim Storey is CEO of the National Conference of State Legislatures, a bipartisan organization representing state lawmakers and legislative staffs. Storey joined NCSL in the 1980s, holding nine different positions before he was appointed chief executive officer in 2019. He lives with his family in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

Sue Urahn is president and CEO of The Pew Charitable Trusts. She has served at Pew for more than 30 years, working in multiple areas including planning, evaluation, and state policy. Before joining Pew, Urahn worked in policy research with the Minnesota House of Representatives and at the University of Minnesota.

GOP govts join Trump pledge designed to shield ratepayers from data center costs

BY AMELIA TWYMAN

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Thursday announced the addition of Republican governors, legislators, utility services and tech companies into his voluntary pledge aimed at keeping data center construction and operation costs off the shoulders of American consumers.

The Ratepayer Protection Pledge, first signed by the president in March, requires companies that build and use data centers to pay for any new infrastructure upgrades and generation resources that serve them.

Tech giants Google, Microsoft, Meta, Oracle, xAI, OpenAI and Amazon all signed onto the initial pledge. Now, the measure is expanding to include nearly 200 more stakeholders, including multiple governors.

Electric companies and other utilities generally pay for infrastructure upgrades with the revenue that comes from what their customers pay. The agreement aims to shift that cost in communities with new data centers directly to the centers' companies. According to Trump, the initiative will supply 80% of all the power delivered to American businesses and homes.

"As new data centers go up, all of the electricity bills for American families will actually come down," Trump said during a roundtable event at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday.

He added that Big Tech companies are "happy" to foot the bill for data centers because it will allow them to continue to function and grow.

"I've always said that America's goal must be to dominate the future, and that includes being the No. 1 superpower in artificial intelligence," Trump said. "This is how we'll grow our economy, lower the cost of living, protect American consumers and lead the world in AI and high tech."

Republican Govs. Jeff Landry of Louisiana, Brian Kemp of Georgia, Jim Pillen of Nebraska and Brad Little of Idaho joined the president at the roundtable to promote their commitment to the pledge. Some governors manage the state utility commissions that set electricity prices.

A total of 23 Republican governors signed the pledge, according to an undated document the White House sent reporters Thursday morning. Only Florida's Ron DeSantis, New Hampshire's Kelly Ayotte and Vermont's Phil Scott declined to sign.

The executives said large power plants are supplying energy for their states without raising consumer costs, and touted partnerships with companies such as Meta.

Landry said his state's deal with Meta will "save Louisiana \$2.6 billion," helping to strengthen "river liability" and reduce "resiliency costs" for those who live along the Gulf Coast.

In Georgia, Kemp said the pledge will support the operation of nuclear power plants while keeping rates low for local communities.

Contradicting numbers

The environmental advocacy group Climate Power published a report Thursday that counters the president's promises of lowered electricity costs for consumers.

According to the organization, prices have spiked 18% on average since Trump took office.

"While Trump stages PR stunts to save his tanking approval rating, Americans are paying the price for his cost-raising agenda," Climate Power said in the report. "As gas prices hit \$4 per gallon again this year thanks to Trump's war of choice in Iran, Americans in five states faced rate hikes as high as \$9 a month."

The states it listed were Missouri, North Carolina, Connecticut, New Mexico and Oregon.

Beating China

The speakers Thursday, including Trump, governors, U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin consistently said the pledge could help win an AI race with China.

"Americans are united in their desire to supercharge our economy, to increase our national security by keeping our lead in artificial intelligence over China," Wright said.

They are also "united in their frustration over the ruinous nearly 30% price rise in electricity across the country during the Biden administration," he added.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 16 of 73

Trump noted China's authoritarian government does not require environmental impact studies or other permits.

House bill

Earlier this week, the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce unanimously passed a bill similar to the Ratepayer Protection Pledge to protect Americans from paying higher electricity costs tied to data centers.

Sponsored by Reps. Gabe Evans, a Colorado Republican, and Kathy Castor, a Florida Democrat, the bipartisan Ratepayer Protection Act would require state utility regulators to consider adopting standards for data centers to pay for their own electricity, infrastructure and other developments.

"America must build the energy infrastructure necessary to win the global AI race and outcompete adversaries like Communist China—but hardworking families should never be forced to subsidize that growth through higher electric bills," Evans, who is the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy, said in a statement Tuesday.

Just before it passed, 52-0, the committee narrowed the scope of the bill to focus specifically on data centers. Language in an earlier draft would have applied to power plants with a maximum electricity demand of 100 megawatts or more, according to Politico.

The Data Center Coalition, an advocacy group representing some of the biggest names in the industry including Amazon, Microsoft and Google, said in a statement Wednesday that it supported the original version of the bill but took issue with the changes.

The changes "single out the data center industry, leaving everyday Americans vulnerable to the costs associated with large load growth from other industries as they continue to expand operations in the U.S.," Josh Levi, the group's president and CEO, said.

Progressives push outright ban

Some Democratic lawmakers, including as Energy and Commerce ranking member Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, have expressed support for the more restrictive idea of a national data center moratorium.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont have introduced parallel bills in their respective chambers to implement a nationwide AI data center moratorium.

Such legislation would temporarily prohibit the construction of new data centers and the expansion of existing ones in the U.S. until Congress addresses the economic, environmental and safety consequences associated with the facilities. Last week, New York became the first state to impose a ban on AI data centers.

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

US House and Senate split on ending Trump's war in Iran, as gas prices rise

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — One day after President Donald Trump attended the dignified transfer of the remains of four U.S. service members killed as a result of the Iran conflict, the two chambers of Congress were at odds over whether to rein in the president's military powers in the monthslong war.

While members of the U.S. House approved a War Powers Resolution 214-208, with four Republicans joining all Democrats, lawmakers in the U.S. Senate rejected the measure by a slim margin of 47-49, though two senators who previously supported the measure did not vote.

Trump reignited the conflict earlier this month, rupturing a ceasefire during 60-day negotiations between the U.S. and Iran to end the war. The countries have since been trading rocket fire on a near-daily basis.

The most recent deaths of U.S. soldiers in the conflict bring the total killed to 18. Three service members were killed July 17 and July 18 in an Iranian strike at a U.S. airbase in Jordan, and a fourth was killed during a controlled detonation of an Iranian drone July 19 at a U.S. base in Iraq.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 17 of 73

The dignified transfer, in which the remains of soldiers are transferred from an aircraft arriving from the theater of operations back to the United States, occurred at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. The soldiers were identified by the Pentagon as:

Army 1st Lt. Tyler James Feehan, 25, of Ewa Beach, Hawaii

Army Pvt. Isabella Gonzales, 19, of Carrollton, Texas

Army Sgt. Angel S. Rampersad, 28, of Ozone Park, New York

Army Sgt. Michael Emmanuel Swinton, 30, of Fayetteville, North Carolina

Gas prices shoot back up

Economic fallout is also center stage again as Iran has choked off nearly all traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's petroleum traveled prior to the war.

Oil reached over \$100 a barrel Thursday, and AAA clocked gas prices at \$4.09 a gallon across the U.S.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who prefers the title secretary of War, told Senate appropriators Tuesday the war has so far cost \$37.5 billion. The administration has requested an additional \$67 billion.

Dissident Republicans

House Republicans who sided with Democrats to stop Trump's military action in Iran included Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, Warren Davidson of Ohio and Tom Barrett of Michigan.

In the Senate, Republicans Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rand Paul of Kentucky, who both voted "yes" for some or all of the dozen Iran War Powers Resolutions considered so far during the conflict, did not vote.

A spokesperson for Murkowski said the senator returned to Alaska Wednesday for a family emergency. Paul's office did not immediately respond regarding the reason for his absence.

Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican locked in a tough reelection race, supported the measure Thursday.

As he has on all previous votes to curb the president's war powers in Iran, Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., opposed the resolution, which some argue is not legal.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in early May that the 1973 War Powers Resolution is "un-constitutional."

Congress overruled President Richard Nixon's veto of the measure meant to rein in his actions during the Vietnam War.

According to Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell on Monday, 100 troops have been injured since July 7, and 96% have returned to work.

The department's Defense Casualty Analysis System only identifies five injuries during Operation Epic Fury in July, and 420 total since the conflict began Feb. 28.

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

USDA reversal on crop insurance change welcomed by farm groups

BY JEFF BEACH

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is reversing course on a change to a federal crop insurance policy to allow farmers to buy more protection if weather or field conditions prevent them from planting a crop.

USDA had eliminated the option to buy additional prevented planting insurance going into the 2026 growing season. This raised concerns from growers in North Dakota, where the buy-up option has been a popular risk-management tool.

In a Tuesday hearing of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee, U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., asked Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins where the department stood on the policy.

"We are 100% supportive of that and are moving forward to execute that buy-up option," Rollins said.

The change will restore the 5% buy-up option, which provided additional coverage for more than 67 million acres across the country in 2025. North Dakota accounted for 10 million of those acres, Hoeven said.

Justin Sherlock, past president of the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association and a director with the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 18 of 73

American Soybean Association, said restoring the buy-up option is welcome news, but that farm groups felt that USDA was required by law to offer it.

He said defending crop insurance in general was the bigger issue.

"It was the concern that this could be a bigger infringement upon the crop insurance program as Congress intended it."

While he was encouraged by Rollins' comments, Sherlock said he would like to see the change noted in the Federal Register or in a formal statement from USDA.

Prevented planting was not a major issue in North Dakota this year, but Sherlock did benefit from hail insurance on some land in Griggs County.

"I wouldn't be farming without it," Sherlock said of federal crop insurance.

Hoeven credited working with Chair Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., of the Senate Agriculture Committee on emphasizing the need to return to the previous policy.

"Given the challenges facing farm country, we worked very hard to restore this prevented plant buy-up option to provide our producers with an additional layer of protection when disaster prevents them from planting their fields," Hoeven said in a news release.

Reach North Dakota Monitor deputy editor Jeff Beach at jbeach@northdakotamonitor.com.

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

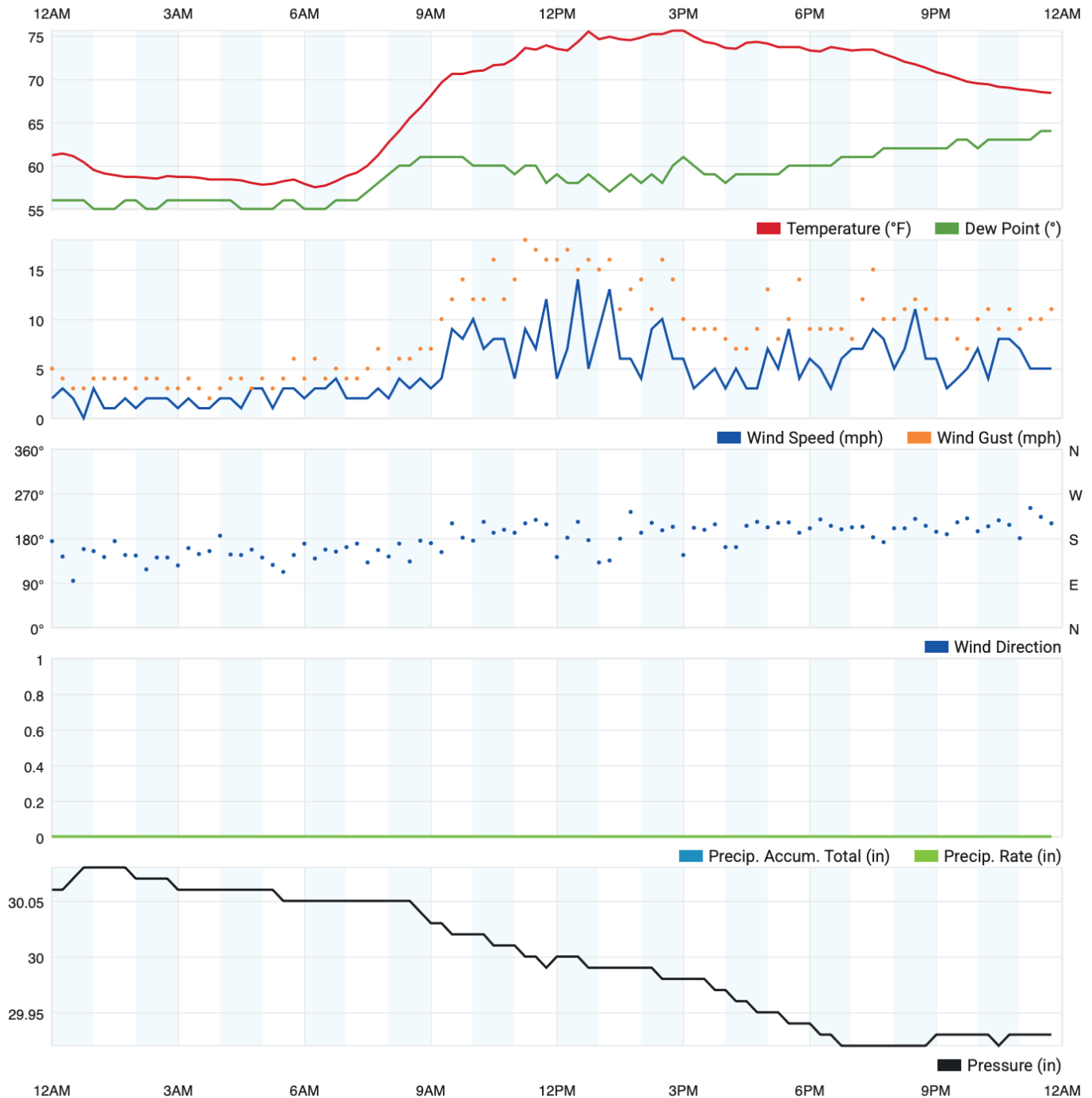
North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach is based in the Fargo area. His interests include agriculture, renewable energy and rural issues.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 19 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 23, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 20 of 73

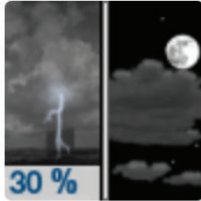
Today



High: 91 °F

Hot

Tonight



Low: 67 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Partly Cloudy

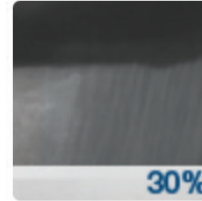
Saturday



High: 100 °F

Hot

Saturday Night



Low: 72 °F

Chance
Showers

Sunday



High: 100 °F

Hot



Today's Severe Weather Risk Overview

July 24, 2026
1:48 AM

Friday Afternoon and Evening - June 24th

Timing/Location

While uncertainty is present on coverage of storms, they are most likely in northern SD from mid afternoon through this evening.

Primary Threats for the **Dark Green** areas

Tornado Potential

Very Low Low Medium High

Max Hail Size

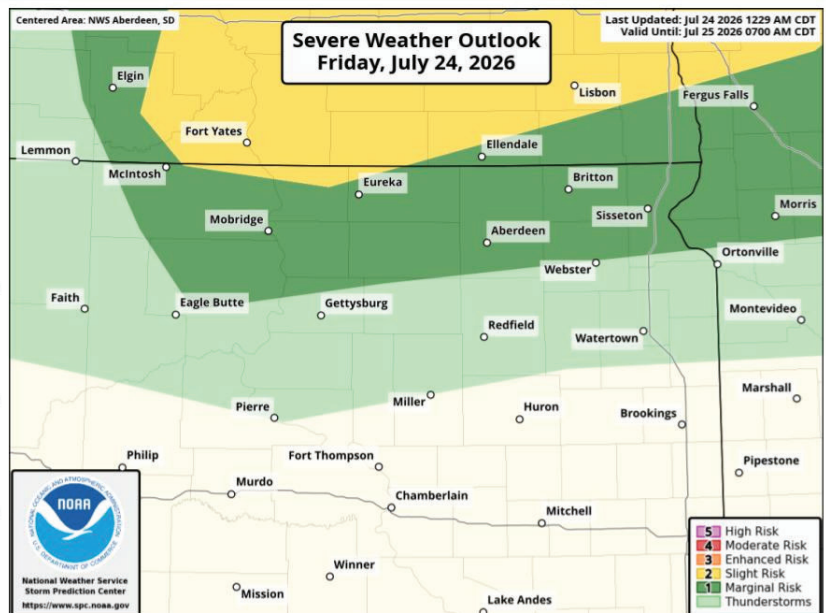
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low Medium High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Marginal (Level 1 of 5) to Slight (Level 2 of 5) Risk for severe weather is in place, mainly over northern SD (along and north of US-12). Storms may have difficulty forming due to a capped setup. Wind gusts of 60 mph and hail of 1" in diameter will be the main threats.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 21 of 73



Details on Today's Severe Weather Risk

July 24, 2026
2:05 AM

Uncertainty on coverage, but most likely over southern ND into northern SD

Location

- Develop in north central SD and south central ND.

Timing

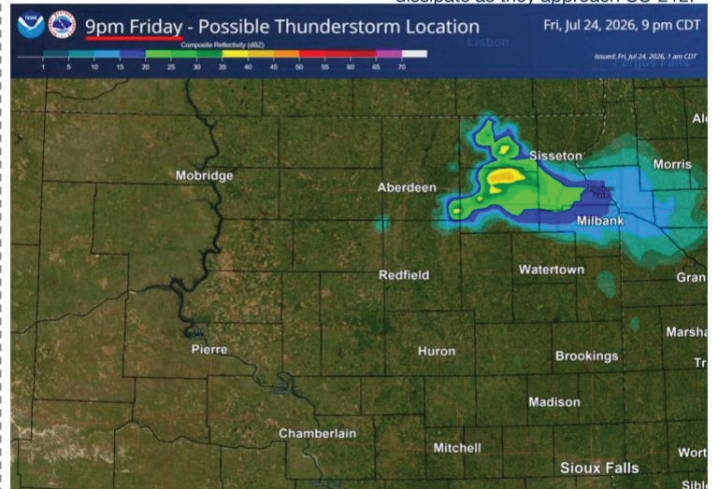
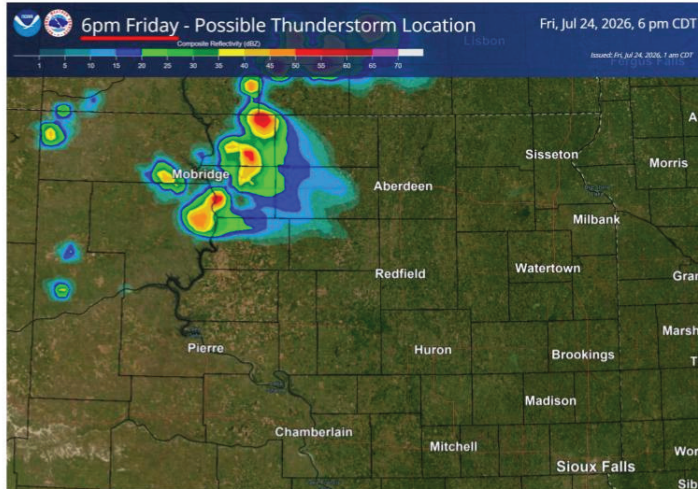
- Start between 3-5 PM, continue through 8-10 PM.

Movement

- Southeast at 35-45 mph.

Uncertainty

- Coverage: Isolated to scattered storms (15-30%) are expected to dissipate as they approach US-212.



Make sure to monitor later forecasts for the latest updates on how the thunderstorms will evolve later today



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Thunderstorms are possible (15-30% chance) over northern SD late this afternoon and into the evening hours. The storms will initially develop in north central SD and south central ND before moving quickly to the southeast. As the storms move southeast of US-12, they will diminish.



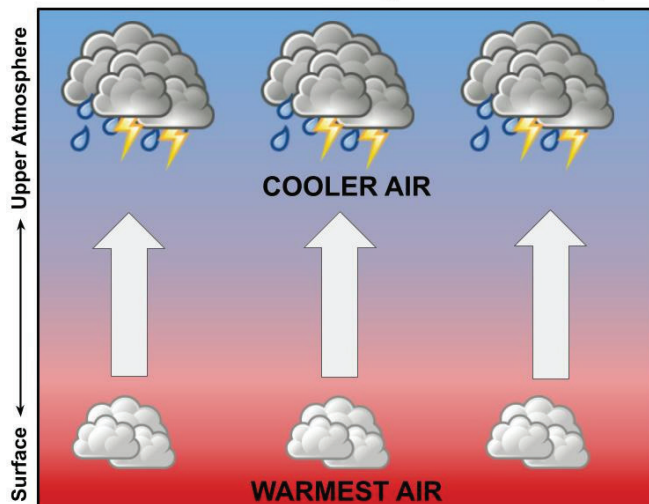
What is "The Cap"?

July 23, 2026
1:18 PM CDT

A Cap is a layer of warm air above the surface that may prevent storm growth.

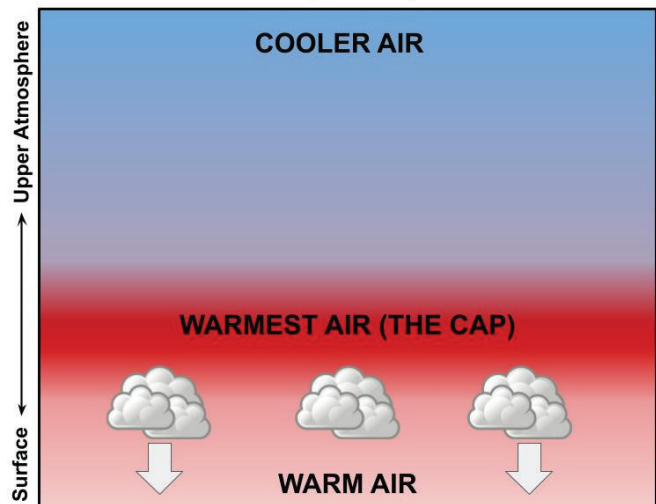
Typical Thunderstorm Setup

- Warmest air is near the surface.
- Air from the surface is warmer than its surroundings, allowing it to continue to rise.
- Storms form as the air reaches the upper levels of the atmosphere.



"Capped" or Conditional Setup

- Warmest air is located 1-2 miles above the surface.
- Air from the surface becomes cooler than its surroundings, causing it to sink back down.
- Since the air can't reach the upper levels, storms can't form.



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 22 of 73



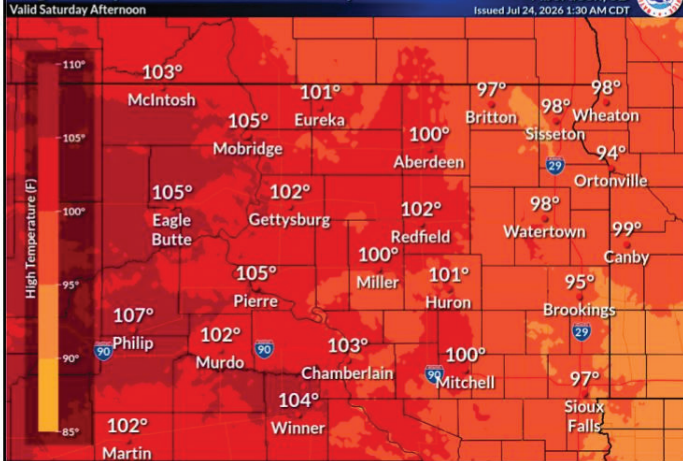
Weekend Warmth

July 24, 2026
1:45 AM CDT

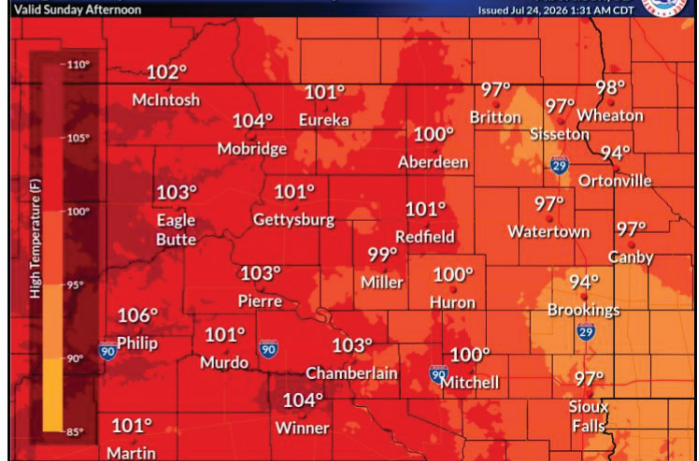
Much of the area could see highs of 100° or higher this weekend.

- By this weekend, temperatures warm into the upper 90s to low 100s across much of the area.
 - The best chances to see 100°+ will be *along and west of the Missouri River*.
- This level of heat will impact anyone without adequate cooling or hydration, particularly those sensitive to heat.

High Temperatures on Saturday



High Temperatures on Sunday



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

By this weekend, much of the area will see temperatures in the upper 90s to low 100s. The best chances to see highs over 100° will be along and west of the Missouri River. This level of heat will impact anyone without adequate cooling or hydration, particularly those sensitive to heat.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 23 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 12:49 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 6:11 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 11:47 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1931

Record Low: 46 in 1905

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.52

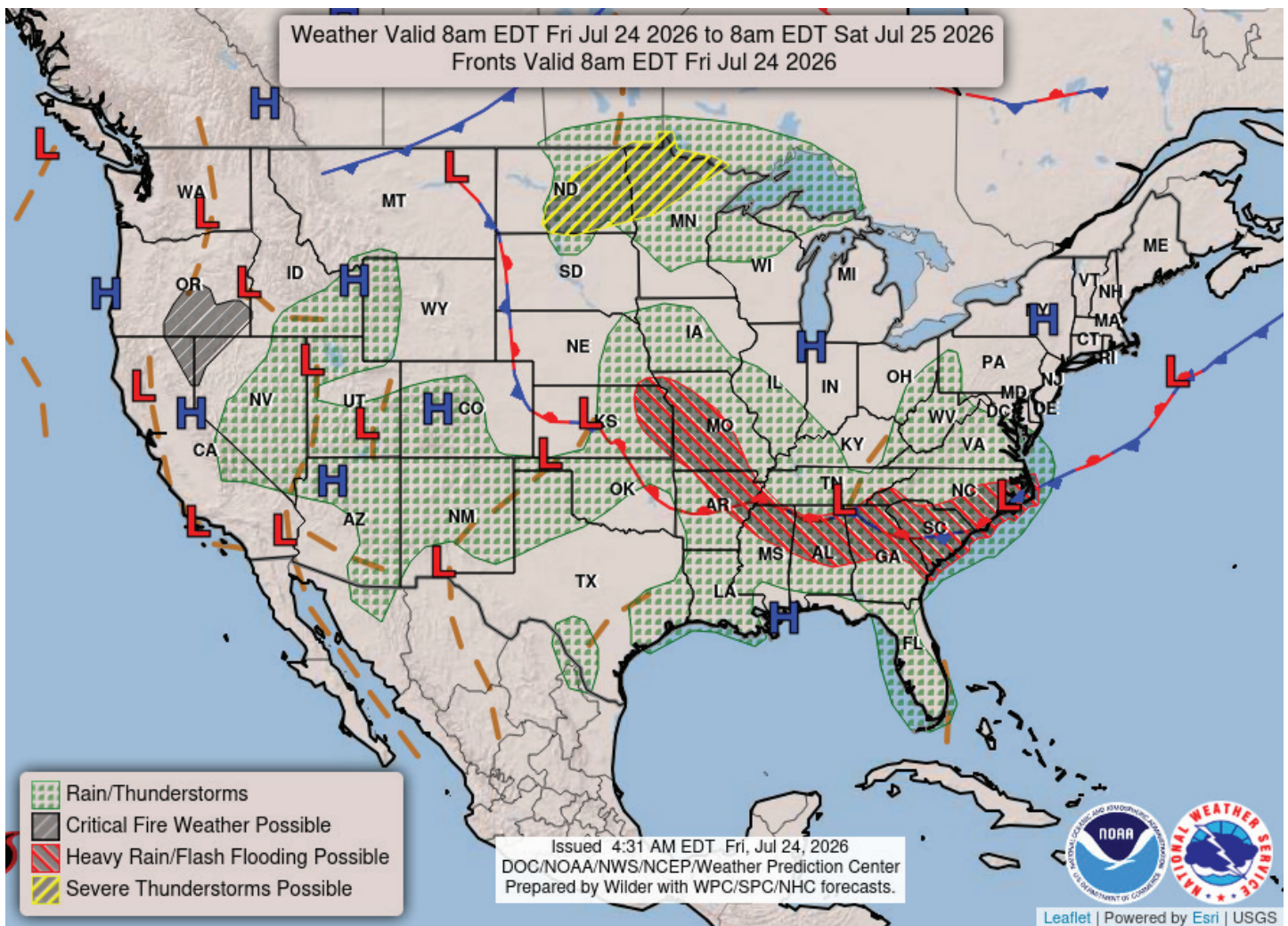
Precip to date in July.: 4.77

Average Precip to date: 13.53

Precip Year to Date: 14.24

Sunset Tonight: 9:10 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:08 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 24 of 73

Today in Weather History

July 24, 1993: A severe thunderstorm struck southern Hyde County, including the city of Highmore, with winds more than 60 mph and heavy rains of two to four inches. Near Stephan, in far southern Hyde County, an estimated of over four inches of rain in 20 minutes caused flooding damage to a bridge. Three to nine inches of rain caused widespread flash flooding and flood damage to Day, Roberts, and southeastern Marshall Counties. Especially hard hit was an area from Webster, northeastward through the Pickerell and Buffalo Lakes area, to Sisseton. A state of emergency was declared in Sisseton. The heavy rains overwhelmed a small creek that flows through Sisseton, swelling it to three blocks wide and up to five feet deep. The rushing water carried lumber, railroad ties, propane tanks, and several vehicles. Flood damage occurred to 70 percent of all buildings in Sisseton, including 100 homes. In Webster, the excessive rain flooded all the sewer lifts that pump water out of low-lying areas in town. The sewer system then backed up into homes and businesses. The rainstorm flooded nine of the 12 main floor rooms at the Super 8 motel in Webster. Roads and bridge damage was also extensive in Roberts, Day, and Marshall Counties with about 50 roads and bridges in Day County damaged by the flooding. Areas lakes, including Pickerell, Blue Dog, Enemy Swim, and Buffalo lakes rose over two feet, inundating areas around lake homes and submerging docks. Some estimated storm total rainfall amounts include; 4.60 inches in Webster; 3.91 in Waubay; 3.90 in Britton; and 3.60 inches near Ashton.

July 24, 1997: Over 6 inches of rain fell in the Conde area in far northeast Spink County. Water was over Highway 37, and many town basements were flooded. One basement filled with 5 feet of water. Nearly 7 inches of rain was received at Lake Poinsett, and over 6 inches of rain was received in Estelline. Hidewood Creek in Hamlin County overflowed its banks. Water went into many residences homes, and some people were evacuated. A small bridge was taken out by the high water, and Highway 28 was closed for an hour.

1886 — Rain fell at Lawrence, KS, for the first time in four weeks. Rain fell over much of the state of Kansas that day relieving a severe drought which began in May. The very dry weather ruined crops in Kansas. (David Ludlum)

1930: An estimated, F5 tornado tore through Montello, Veneto, and Friuli in Italy. The tornado killed 23 people along its 50 miles path.

1936 — A record all time Kansas state high temperature set just 6 days earlier was tied in the town of Alton, located in Osborne County. (US National Weather Service Wichita)

1942 — The temperature at Las Vegas, NV, hit 117 degrees to set an all-time record for that location. The record was tied on July 19, 2005.

1947 — One of the most powerful strokes of lightning ever measured yielded 345,000 amperes of electricity in Pittsburgh, PA. (The Weather Channel)

1952: The temperature at Louisville, Georgia soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record. The temperature also hit 112 degrees in Greenville, Georgia on August 20, 1983.

1980 — Claudette, a weak tropical storm, deluged southeastern Texas with torrential rains. The Houston suburb of Alvin received 43 inches, a 24 hour record for the U.S. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Twenty-one cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 91 degrees at Beckley, WV, was their hottest reading in 25 years of records, and marked their third straight day of record 90 degree heat. Bakersfield, CA, dipped to 60 degrees, marking their eighth straight morning of record cool weather. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Oklahoma, and over Nebraska and Wisconsin. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Brainerd, NE. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Afternoon thunderstorms produced some flash flooding in New Mexico. Albuquerque, NM, was deluged with an inch and a half of rain in forty minutes. Evening thunderstorms soaked Whie Pine, PA, with two inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: A tornado fluctuated between the category EF1 and the more destructive EF2 strikes Northwood and Pittsfield, as well as nine other towns in New Hampshire. It first touches down in Deerfield, then travels through Northwood, Epsom, Pittsfield, Barnstead, and Alton. From there, it rages through New Durham, Wolfeboro, Freedom, Ossipee, and Effingham. The storm destroys several homes, damaged dozens of others and kills at least one person.



Encouraging the Pastor

Just as God calls pastors to shepherd His flock, He calls us to uplift them through prayer and encouragement..

2 Timothy 1:1-6: 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day,

4 longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Do you attend church? If so, God has placed people in your path whose job it is to train you in righteousness and speak truth into your life. Your pastor, who loves you and cares about your spiritual well-being, needs to know you care about him too.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul models the way we're to encourage those who minister:

Tell your pastor—and his family—you love him. Nothing is more uplifting than to know someone cares. Words are valuable, and actions can speak even more loudly. So intentionally seek ways to demonstrate your love for them.

Express confidence in the pastor. Let him know you recognize the sincerity of his faith and appreciate his commitment to instill God's truth in your life.

Affirm the call of God on his life. Work with your pastor; respond to him in a way that shows you understand he's been called to minister and God's hand is upon him. And when you experience the Lord working through him, let him know.

When was the last time you expressed appreciation to your pastor and his family? This week, look for ways to show them love (1 Thess. 5:12–13). And above all, pray for them: Ask the Lord to guide and strengthen them as they follow Him.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 26 of 73

The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- ☐ Black & White.....\$52.00/year
- ☐ Colored\$80.00/year
- ☐ Colored\$49.00/6 months
- ☐ E-Weekly*\$35.00/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- ☐ 1 Month\$16.00
- ☐ 3 Months.....\$28.00
- ☐ 6 Months.....\$38.00
- ☐ 9 Months.....\$52.00
- ☐ 12 Months\$60.00

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 27 of 73



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.23.26

3 6 13 14 40 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.21.26

25 37 59 68 70 10

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$743,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 9 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.26

1 12 14 29 33 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,100,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 24 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.26

8 11 22 25 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 39 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.26

9 51 54 60 61 15

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 8 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.26

4 5 22 50 58 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$600,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 8 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Wildfires near Madrid and in southwestern France force tens of thousands to evacuate

By JOSEPH WILSON and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spain's government declared a national emergency Friday after wildfires forced the evacuation of some 10,000 people in the central region of Madrid, while in southern France tens of thousands fled their homes to escape two major blazes.

"We are experiencing a dramatic situation, not just in several Spanish regions but also in neighboring countries," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote on X.

"My solidarity with all the people who have been affected and been forced to leave their homes."

The national emergency in Spain means that the nation's interior ministry, which controls police and security forces, has taken charge of overseeing the firefighting efforts by Spain's regions as they struggle to battle multiple blazes that are being fanned by a heatwave. Another large fire in the central province of Ávila prompted national authorities to step in.

The regional government of Madrid, which spans a wide area around the capital city, said 10,000 people had been evacuated from different villages as multiple fires raged out of control late on Thursday.

"In my 60 years I have never seen something like this in my village, I have never seen fire of these dimensions," Francisco Martínez, the mayor of Burgohondo, whose 1,500 residents were preventively evacuated, told Spain's national broadcaster TVE.

Spain's military emergency brigades and national firefighting brigades have mobilized to support regional firefighting units and water-dumping aircraft.

Spain has seen an estimated 1,300 square kilometers (500 square miles) already burned this year, over four times the amount of terrain that was burned through the first half of 2025.

This year's fires include Spain's second-largest ever fire that consumed some 320 square kilometers (120 square miles) in recent days in the province of Guadalajara north of Madrid. Thirteen people were also killed in a fire in southern Spain earlier this month, the deadliest fire in recent memory for Spain.

Sánchez called on Wednesday for a pact between political parties to fight climate change that he said is key to adapting to a more fire-prone climate.

Temperatures are expected to top 39 degrees Celsius (102 Fahrenheit) in parts of Spain, with a high of 44 C (111 F) in Almeria in the southeast.

Thousands flee flames in southern France

Authorities in southwestern France on Friday ordered more mass evacuations on the Atlantic coast because of large wildfires. An estimated 40,000 people have been driven from their homes over the past two days in the region.

More than 87 square kilometers (34 square miles) have been burned by the blaze that has been raging since Wednesday near the touristic Cap Ferret peninsula. Some people were forced to flee by boat.

France requested the activation of the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism.

"We will soon be able to rely on reinforcements including two Croatian Canadair firefighting aircraft, two Portuguese Air Tractor aircraft, and two heavy-lift Black Hawk helicopters from the Czech Republic and Slovakia," French President Emmanuel Macron said.

Southern Europe has seen multiple large fires this summer. Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing twice as quickly as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Globally, 2025 was the third-hottest year on record, bringing severe heat waves across Europe. Scientists warn that climate change is exacerbating the frequency and intensity of heat and dryness especially in southeastern Europe, making the region more vulnerable to health impacts and wildfires.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 29 of 73

US tariff hikes linked to claims of foreign forced labor dismay and anger trading partners

By ELAINE KURTENBACH and CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writers

BANGKOK (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump's latest set of tariff hikes drew objections Friday from America's trading partners including China and Japan, with Australia's trade minister slamming them as "completely unjustified."

The administration announced extra tariffs of 10% to 12.5% on 60 economies late Thursday, saying the countries had failed to adequately enforce a ban on goods made with forced labor.

The new tariffs took effect just as stopgap levies Trump imposed after a stinging defeat at the Supreme Court expired at 12:01 a.m. Friday.

Countries object to what they call unfounded labor claims

Australian Trade Minister Don Farrell rejected claims linking Australia, a major exporter of beef, gold and copper, to modern slavery and raising the tariff on its exports to the U.S. to 12.5% from the 10% level imposed after Trump's "Liberation Day" hikes last year.

"We believe that amongst all of the countries in the world Australia does take the issue of slavery, modern slavery, seriously, and will continue to do that," Farrell told reporters in Adelaide.

Australia believes the higher tariffs are "completely unjustified and we will continue to lobby the United States Trade Representative to remove all tariffs on Australian goods," Farrell said.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said the tariffs on his country, also subject to a 12.5% import duty, were "extremely disappointing," unjustified and harmful to trade.

A U.S. investigation serving as the basis for the tariffs did not provide meaningful evidence to support allegations of forced labor.

"Tariffs are not the way — they drive up costs and uncertainty for businesses," he wrote on X.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas questioned the U.S. stance in comments on Channel News Asia.

"If you compare our labor laws to the ones of the United States, I mean we have, people have paid vacations, we have very good conditions, labor conditions for our employees, so it's not really grounded," Kallas said.

Also facing a 12.5% tariff, Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry, which reiterated its stance of not condoning the use of forced labor, said it would "continue to engage the USTR (United States Trade Representative) to explore options."

Some hope to forestall the tariff hikes

Japan likewise protested the 12.5% tariff imposed on its exports, noting Tokyo had been reassured by the Trump administration that there would be no more tariffs on top of an earlier agreement on a 10% U.S. import duty.

"Our understanding is both sides are still committed to that," Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told a routine news conference.

"It is regrettable that the measure imposes tariffs on the grounds of non-existence of measures banning imports of goods made by forced labor, even though Japan's industry and trade are in line with international rules," Kihara said.

South Korea said it will maintain close communication with the United States to preserve a mutual "balance of benefits."

South Korea's trade ministry said the announcement eased some uncertainty over U.S. trade policy, but noted that a Section 301 investigation into alleged Korean excess production continues.

The combined duties on South Korean exports should not exceed 15%, the ministry said in a statement.

Thailand noted it is subject to the new 12.5% tariff by the U.S. under the forced labor provision, but the measure exempts around 2,120 items, representing more than half the value of Thai goods exported to the U.S.

Thailand also is monitoring the possibility of an additional tariff on the grounds of structural overcapac-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 30 of 73

ity under another ongoing U.S. probe against 16 countries, but Washington has not yet announced those results, the Thai Commerce Ministry said in a statement.

China opposes unilateral tariffs in 'all forms'

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it "opposes all forms of unilateral tariffs" in response to the new 12.5% tariffs, reiterating a longstanding statement by Beijing.

"Tariff wars and trade wars do not serve any parties' interests," ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a regular press conference.

Trade tensions have clouded relations between China and the U.S., two of the world's biggest economies, as Trump's hefty "Liberation Day" tariffs resulted in a sharp drop in Chinese exports to the U.S.

Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who agreed to set up new boards of trade and investment at their mid-May meeting in Beijing, are expected to meet again in September.

Some Chinese exporters say, however, the impacts are so far limited as the latest U.S. tariffs on China are still at lower levels than last year's rates, which were initially 34%.

"Of course it'd be best if they (tariffs) are not there," said Richard Chan, manager of Golden Arts Gifts & Decor, which manufactures Christmas trees and decorations in the southern Chinese city of Dongguan and supplies globally to those including Walmart.

Golden Arts' share of sales to the U.S., however, already have fallen to approximately 10% to 20% as U.S. tariffs added more uncertainty over the past months. They have pivoted more to Europe, which now accounts for roughly 70% of their sales, Chan said.

The latest import duties might stick

Wendy Cutler, a former senior U.S. trade official, said the latest round of tariffs involved "few surprises" since they range just between 10% and 12.5%.

The U.S. Trade Representative's office spent four months investigating the basis for those tariffs to meet legal requirements under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974.

"Time will tell whether the third attempt to impose tariffs is the charm and this action stands up to legal challenges," said Cutler, senior vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute.

These duties are less likely than earlier ones to be overruled by U.S. courts, she said.

Further tariffs may be coming in the fall related to alleged structural excess capacity of trading partners, she noted.

Experts say these tariffs may be less disruptive than others

Washington is generally tending to engage in increased trade friction, William Bratton of BNP Paribas said in a research note Friday.

"On the positive side, however, these tariffs are lower than the earlier (Emergency Powers Act) 'reciprocal' tariffs and appear to exempt a substantial proportion of Asia's current trade flows with the U.S.," he said.

The Trump administration included many exclusions of products from the tariffs, including for goods the U.S. does not produce, Cutler noted.

"This should reduce the impact of these duties. Nevertheless, they will contribute to higher prices both for end consumers and businesses importing inputs and machinery," she said.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy says he's in talks with a US company to jointly produce Patriot air defenses

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he has met in Kyiv with senior representatives of Raytheon, the U.S. company that makes the Patriot air defense systems Ukraine desperately needs to counter the ballistic missiles Russia uses to advance its invasion.

The meeting came less than three weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump vowed to give Ukraine a license to produce Patriots. The pledge marked an important shift as Trump recently has adopted a more positive tone towards Zelenskyy.

In another sign that Ukraine is changing minds in Washington, ardent Trump ally Laura Loomer met

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 31 of 73

with Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Thursday. After years of minimizing the invasion, she rebuked Russian President Vladimir Putin for missile attacks on Ukraine.

The Ukrainian leader said late Thursday he met with a Raytheon delegation, adding that the company was ready to jointly produce Patriot interceptors with Ukraine. The system is made up of radars, command-and-control systems and different types of interceptor missiles.

The company made no immediate comment about the meeting on its website or social media accounts. "Our teams — both at the government level and from the private sector — will stay in close touch to work (it) out," Zelenskyy said on social media.

Zelenskyy is keen to move quickly on a coproduction agreement as Russia relentlessly fires ballistic missiles that are hard to stop and cause civilian casualties as well as inflicting huge damage on civilian areas.

Zelenskyy has for several years been pleading for more and quicker Patriot deliveries from Western partners. Ukraine has developed its own innovative air defenses but large-scale production is vital.

Even so, experts and Kyiv officials have cautioned that setting up production in Ukraine would likely take years.

Putin has sought to portray Russia as negotiating from a position of strength in the war as the U.S. engaged under Trump in a diplomatic push to end the war that has produced no results so far.

But since it first attack its neighbor in 2014, Russia has captured only around 20% of the country.

Now, the Russian army's advance is stalling due to Ukraine's successful front-line and mid- and long-range attacks using cutting-edge drone technology it has developed at home and that is now coveted by other countries, Western officials and analysts say.

Ukraine has expanded its campaign of disruption with bigger and increasingly frequent drone attacks inside Russia that are hitting high-profile targets, causing fuel shortages and piling pressure on Putin.

Ukrainian forces again targeted the logistical hubs of Wildberries, Russia's biggest online retailer that is often compared to Amazon, the company's founder said Friday.

Wildberries logistical facilities in St. Petersburg, the adjacent Leningrad region and in Simferopol in illegally annexed Crimea came under attack, founder Tatyana Kim said.

Photos and videos published by Russian media showed massive plumes of gray smoke rising over St. Petersburg.

Ukraine in recent days struck four other Wildberries warehouses across Russia, sparking massive fires.

Kyiv officials want ordinary Russians to feel the consequences of the war and question whether Putin can keep them safe. The almost daily attacks have caused consternation in Russia.

Ukrainian long-range weapons hit an oil facility nearly 1,350 kilometers (840 miles) from the Ukrainian border as well as a military plant, Zelenskyy said Friday.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported Friday morning that its air defenses shot down 571 Ukrainian drones overnight.

Explosions are heard near a US base in northern Iraq as US-Iran fighting escalates

By JULIA FRANKEL and STELLA MARTANY Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — A series of explosions sounded near a military base hosting U.S. forces in northern Iraq and sirens rang out in Bahrain on Friday, hours after the American military said it finished its 13th night of strikes against Iran.

The conflict has flared again over the past week, as the U.S. has pounded Iran while Tehran has attacked ships in the Strait of Hormuz and targeted U.S. assets and allies in the region. The strait, which is a crucial passage for the world's energy supplies, is at the center of the latest fighting since Iranian attacks can effectively shut the waterway, sending fuel prices soaring worldwide and causing widespread economic turmoil. The Iranian-allied Houthi rebels added further pressure this week by targeting two Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, making good on a threat to cut off an alternative route for the region's oil.

Despite the unpopularity of the war in the U.S. and the widespread damage it has caused in Iran and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 32 of 73

to the global economy, the latest round of fighting has no clear off-ramp. Iran's Health Ministry said 55 people have been killed and over 600 wounded in strikes in recent weeks, as fighting escalated.

US strikes sites across Iran and countries in the region are targeted

An Associated Press journalist heard at least seven blasts Friday morning in the city of Irbil, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, and saw at least four plumes of black smoke rising from areas near or inside a base at the city's airport.

As the U.S. has bombed Iran, Tehran has targeted several countries in the region that host American troops. Bahrain sounded sirens twice on Friday; there were no immediate reports of damage.

U.S. strikes hit a naval base for the Revolutionary Guard in the north of Iran, the Iranian semiofficial news outlets Fars and ISNA reported Friday morning. Blasts from U.S. bombardment overnight were also reported on Iran's Qeshm Island, a base for naval assets including drone boats that Iran can use to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as in Isfahan province, home to a major Iranian air base and one of Iran's nuclear sites. More strikes reportedly hit Iran's southwest Khuzestan province and southern Fars province.

U.S. Central Command said the latest barrage was designed to "further degrade Iran's ability to threaten civilian mariners and commercial vessels transiting regional waters" as the Americans push to regain control over the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil and gas transited in peacetime.

Houthis open a new front in the war

Iran's ability to effectively close the Strait of Hormuz — and thus cause economic chaos far beyond the Middle East — gives it tremendous leverage in any negotiations. Its Houthi allies only increased that leverage when they targeted two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea on Thursday — increasing the risks of shipping through another vital route for Middle Eastern oil.

Brent crude, the international standard, topped \$100 a barrel in the wake of the attacks, though it has since come down.

The attacks made good on the Houthis' threat to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait to Saudi-linked shipping. The strait at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, and around 12% of the world's trade, including a fourth of global container traffic, passes through there.

That passage has become ever more crucial for Saudi Arabia, which has diverted millions of barrels of oil a day to its Red Sea port of Yanbu as a way of bypassing the Strait of Hormuz.

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened "major military punishment" against the Houthis if their attacks on ships continue.

Trump also warned Iran over its attacks on ships, saying on social media Thursday that sanctioned Iranian funds in U.S. possession will be used to cover the expense of fixing boats damaged in the war.

"Please let this statement serve to represent, until further notice, that from this point forth, any and all damages done to Ships, Cargo, or anything related thereto, will be paid for by Iranian Money that the United States has in its possession, and controls," Trump said.

It was unclear what legal mechanisms Trump would use to access and spend the funds.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned the suggestion, writing on X that "once governments normalize confiscation, no one's assets are safe. Ensuing chaos will not be pretty or peaceful."

Iran says it has the right to manage traffic and potentially charge fees in the Strait of Hormuz, which was open to all toll-free before the war. It has attacked ships using a route through the strait that is overseen by U.S. forces and intended to be outside Tehran's control.

No bodycam footage in fatal Madison police shooting, because the department doesn't require cameras

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

As officials review widely circulated bystander videos of the fatal police shooting of a homeless man in Madison, Wisconsin, one key perspective won't be emerging: footage from the officers' body-worn cameras.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 33 of 73

Unlike nearly every other similarly sized city, Madison doesn't require its police to wear them.

The absence of that footage has left residents in the dark about key moments leading up to the shooting, when police say Corey Ruiz pulled a knife during a struggle with four officers, injuring one of them. That officer then fired the shots, according to police. All four officers have been placed on administrative leave pending a state investigation.

In the meantime, the deadly encounter has reignited a contentious debate about body cameras, one that has long vexed local officials and pitted some of the city's progressive groups against each other.

This past November, the Madison Common Council rejected a proposal to redirect funding from a police oversight group to a body-camera program. A new proposal to allocate \$414,800 for a three-year roll out of the program is expected to be approved by the legislative body.

Police Chief John Patterson has described the proposal as "modest," adding that the cameras had become "essential tools for the modern police officer."

Law enforcement experts tend to agree and some expressed surprise that the city's nearly 500 officers weren't already using the cameras.

"There are very, very few agencies of that size that do not have a body-worn camera program," said Michael D. White, a criminal justice professor at Arizona State University who led training on camera adoption for the U.S. Department of Justice.

"Madison has a long-standing tradition of being an innovative, progressive police department, so it's startling," he added.

As far back as 2016, roughly 80% of police departments with 500 or more sworn officers had acquired body-cameras — a figure that White said was now approaching 100%.

Over the last decade, Madison officials have repeatedly debated adopting the cameras. Committees have borne subcommittees, which have produced feasibility studies, amendments and hours of debate.

Local officials primarily blame budget concerns, along with political inertia, for the ongoing stalemate. Another common source of opposition, identified in a 2021 feasibility study, came from community groups worried the cameras would be used to surveil and criminalize marginalized groups.

"I cannot approve something that doesn't have a policy and procedure behind it that is potentially going to hinder the community more than help the community," said Veronica Figueroa, then a member of the body-worn camera subcommittee.

As camera adoption has become more widespread in recent years, those concerns have largely faded away, according to Common Council President Sabrina Madison.

But she said local officials have largely been preoccupied by another issue: finding shelter for a homeless population that has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was like: if we're going to figure out anything, we're going to figure out how to fund shelter operations," Madison told The Associated Press on Thursday. "So the last couple years, that's where the focus has been."

The city did briefly conduct a body camera pilot program in the summer of 2024. A subsequent report found the cameras had little impact on officers' behavior or the community's feeling toward police.

Dr. Broderick Turner, an independent researcher who analyzed the program and authored the report, noted the length of the pilot — only 90 days — meant there was little time for anyone to notice a meaningful difference. And he described demographic differences in the city's response.

"Black communities tend to want body cameras, but Madison is majority white," Turner said. "The groups opposed were less impacted by crime and less impacted by policing."

For some in the city, Wednesday's shooting has surfaced memories of Tony Robinson, an unarmed 19-year-old who was fatally shot by Madison police in 2015.

His death ultimately led to the creation of the Office of the Independent Police Monitor.

This past winter, Madison lawmakers shot down a budget proposal that would have paid for a body camera program by cutting funds to the monitor.

Katey Nelson, a member of the police civilian oversight board, said the amendment had presented residents with a "false choice."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 34 of 73

"There are cuts that can be made with the Madison Police Department or the County Sheriff's department, but they're trying to pit similar agendas against each other," she said.

"Nobody can agree on anything," Nelson added. "Now we're here, looking at another police shooting where we don't have what we need to make sure the officers are held accountable."

4 Palestinians and 1 Israeli dead after West Bank shooting

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Four Palestinians and one Israeli were killed in a shooting in the northern West Bank, health officials said Friday. Several more people were injured.

The circumstances of the shooting, which occurred near the city of Nablus, were not immediately clear. Violence in the Israeli-occupied territory has flared in recent days.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah said the four Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue services did not say who had killed the Israeli man. Palestinian health officials said they were treating four injured Palestinians, three in critical condition. Israel's rescue service said two injured Israelis were being airlifted out of the West Bank.

The Israeli military said in a statement that soldiers responded to a report of an attack on Israeli civilians hiking near the settlement of Havat Gilad, west of Nablus. It said it had imposed a "temporary cordon" around Nablus and the nearby Palestinian village of Tell.

Indian activist Wangchuk ends 26-day hunger strike as 'Cockroach' protesters vow to press on

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and SHONAL GANGULY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian activist Sonam Wangchuk ended a 26-day hunger strike on Friday that helped galvanize a youth movement that's become one of India's largest protests in recent years, but demonstrators vowed to continue until the education minister resigns.

Wangchuk's fast became a rallying point for India's "Cockroach" protests, which began more than a month ago demanding education reforms after alleged leaks in some of the country's most competitive entrance exams. Since then, the movement has tapped into broader public anger over unemployment, government accountability and economic opportunity, drawing professionals, families and activists to demonstrations in New Delhi and cities across the country.

The demonstrations have become one of the most sustained waves of public dissent against Modi's government in recent years, with thousands returning to the streets even after police used tear gas and batons this week to disperse marchers trying to reach Parliament.

In a post on X, Wangchuk said he ended his fast in the presence of two federal ministers after appeals from dozens of members of parliament and following "a long negotiation on various conditions and in view of possible violence in the country." He did not elaborate on the talks.

Protest organizers said demonstrations would continue until Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned. They have called for demonstrations across the country on Friday in solidarity with students who were beaten by police during a march to Parliament on Monday that drew thousands of people.

"We won't let Sonam sir's sacrifice go in vain," said Abhijeet Dipke, the founder of Cockroach Janta Party, a satirical group that has spearheaded the movement, named in reference to a remark by the country's supreme court chief justice that compared some unemployed young people to cockroaches.

The nationwide protests come a day after Modi publicly addressed the protests for the first time, announcing fast-track courts to prosecute cases involving examination paper leaks. In a separate video message, Modi also said his government would introduce a legislation in Parliament to crack down on exam paper leaks.

The announcements did little to calm the movement, as protesters said they failed to address their demands for government accountability, examination reforms and compensation for the families of students

who died by suicide after exam paper leaks.

Fabeha Sayyed, 23, said Modi's video message showed he was finally paying attention to the issue, but she questioned why he had not asked the education minister to resign.

"If he were so concerned about the protests, about the students and the families of students who committed suicide, then it is not hard for him to get a person to resign," she said.

By the Numbers: This year's Ebola outbreak has spread faster than the worst on record

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — The Ebola outbreak in Congo has killed over 1,000 people, reaching the grim milestone nearly three times faster than the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic that is considered the worst on record.

Data from Congo's Ministry of Health shows that as of Tuesday, the current outbreak, declared on May 15, has recorded 2,536 confirmed cases, including 1,033 deaths.

During the 2014-2016 outbreak, which recorded more than 28,000 cases, including over 11,000 deaths, it took eight months to reach 1,000 deaths from the first recorded case. This year's outbreak has reached that toll in just over two months, making it the fastest outbreak of the disease ever.

The ongoing outbreak has also recorded 2,500 cases almost three times quicker than that of 2014-2016.

Different viruses are behind the two outbreaks

According to the World Health Organization, Ebola is caused by a group of viruses, of which three are known to cause large outbreaks: Ebola virus, Sudan virus and Bundibugyo virus.

This year's outbreak is caused by Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant which has no approved vaccines or treatments.

Meanwhile, the Ebola virus, which is the most common out of the three, induced the 2014-2016 outbreak, considered the deadliest in Congo's history.

The current outbreak is mostly confined to Congo

The Bundibugyo outbreak is largely restricted to Congo except for a few countries, including Uganda. And in Congo, it's limited to five provinces in the eastern region, which is close to the border with Uganda.

The 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak had spread widely in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and spilled over into nearby nations. A small number of cases were also reported in the United States and Europe, linked to West Africa.

The case fatality rate of the two outbreaks

This year's outbreak has so far had a case fatality rate of 40%, and officials blame most of the deaths on patients reporting symptoms late.

The 2014-2016 outbreak, however, had a fatality rate of 66%, overwhelming health systems across multiple countries.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the Ebola virus is the deadliest of the viruses known to have caused large Ebola outbreaks and up to 90% of cases caused by it are fatal if they receive no treatment.

Officials say the peak of the current outbreak could still be ahead because the patient zero has not been confirmed and the majority of new cases are coming from outside the contacts being monitored, as well as delays in identifying the variant behind the virus when cases started being reported.

The 2014-2016 outbreak lasted about three years. The first case was recorded in December 2013, but it was not until March 2014 that the outbreak was detected, and it was officially declared over in June 2016.

Eight years after deadliest antisemitic attack in US history, Tree of Life rabbi bids farewell

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — After surviving the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history, after presiding over multiple funerals for his slain congregants, Rabbi Jeffrey Myers struggled to pray.

"There was this emptiness to it," recalls Myers, of Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh.

He turned to the biblical Book of Psalms — its hymns, poetry and prayers covering "the entire spectrum of human existence and emotion, from elation to utter despair," Myers recalled. "Something told me it's in there somewhere, the inspiration that I need."

He started reading all 150 chapters, in order. When he got to 121, he found words that clicked: "My help comes from God, maker of the heavens and the Earth."

"There it was," Myers says today. "My faith did have the answers. It just took time to be able to find them."

Myers, 70, is retiring this month as spiritual leader of Tree of Life, a position he had assumed just over a year before the shattering events of Oct. 27, 2018.

On that Sabbath morning, a gunman shot his way into the synagogue, shouting antisemitic invective and murdering 11 worshippers from the three congregations sharing the building — Dor Hadash, New Light and Tree of Life.

In the nearly eight years since, the congregation has worked to grieve and heal. It endured a long-delayed trial leading to the gunman's death sentence. It experienced the disruptive pandemic and the groundbreaking for a new building.

"My mission has come to a conclusion to the best that I could," Myers said in an interview. "It was time for the next chapter also for the Tree of Life. It's time to step aside so that there is space for new voices."

Rabbi says goodbye with signature blend of scripture and pop culture

Myers plans to return to his native New Jersey to be near his daughter and granddaughter. He wants to catch up on reading, do some writing, check off some "bucket list" goals with his wife. He also plans to work more on healing his own inner wounds after prioritizing the congregation's needs.

"As Mr. Spock says in 'Star Trek II,' the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few," says Myers, who frequently glides between scriptural and pop culture references.

Myers similarly quoted from the Beatles and Broadway's "Rent" in a farewell address to his congregation on July 17. He thanked congregants, clergy, public officials, the police officers who risked their lives to rescue him, some suffering serious injuries.

He recalled each victim by name. "May your memories always be for a blessing," he said. He concluded by having the congregation join him in singing Carole King's "You've Got a Friend."

Members, in interviews, pay tribute to Myers and what he achieved.

"He was really just a new rabbi and hardly broken in yet, and we went through the thing that we went through," says Audrey Glickman, a survivor of the attack. "He has steered a constant ship and taken care of everyone, and I think he has earned himself a rest."

His journey to Tree of Life started in his childhood synagogue's choir

Myers grew up near Newark, New Jersey, recalling summers at the beach at Asbury Park, where transistor radios were tuned to pop music stations. As a boy, he sang soprano in his synagogue choir. By his mid-teens, he was leading that choir and developing his distinctive high tenor voice — one that, in 2018, was heard worldwide as he sang the traditional Jewish mourner's prayers for those who fell.

Myers started college as a pre-med student but soon pivoted toward his deep interests in Judaism and music. He went to school to become a cantor or hazzan, a type of Jewish clergy who leads worship.

After several years serving congregations in New York and New Jersey in the middle-of-the-road Conservative denomination of Judaism, he studied for ordination as a rabbi and came to Tree of Life. It was a small Conservative congregation, sharing its building with two others in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood, the heart of Jewish Pittsburgh.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 37 of 73

Sabbath services had just begun that Saturday morning. After hearing gunfire in the lobby, he urged worshippers to flee if they were able — and those who were frail to lie down or hide. He took shelter as he heard gunshots ring out.

"I was praying," Myers recalled on the witness stand during the gunman's 2023 trial. "I thought about the history of my people, how we've been persecuted and hunted and slaughtered for centuries, and how all of them must have felt the moments before their death, and what did they do."

He asked God to forgive him for being unable to save his congregants. He expected to die but was escorted to safety by police officers.

He was still wearing his prayer shawl.

After surviving the attack, Myers' leadership stood out

In the days afterward, the funeral services unfolded. Alan Hausman, a lay leader in the congregation who has long worked in public safety, accompanied Myers throughout that week. Responding to deadly emergencies "takes a toll on you," Hausman says. "And he kept going."

With its damaged building a crime scene, Tree of Life began worshipping at a nearby synagogue, Rodef Shalom. For Myers and others, it was crucial to resume their Jewish observances in defiance of the killer's intentions.

There were uplifting moments. Sam Schachner, the congregation's then-president, recalls his son's bar mitzvah a few weeks after the attacks — the first truly joyful event after Oct. 27.

Myers "could have reasonably said, 'I've been through a lot. Can we postpone this?'" Schachner says. "He didn't. He had this ability to be there for others when he was going through such pain."

Then the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the healing. Myers led remote services from his home. But presiding over his daughter's outdoor wedding helped, fulfilling another Psalm's promise. "God turned my mourning into rejoicing," he says.

After resuming in-person worship, the three congregations braced for a long-delayed trial. It began in the spring of 2023, just as Myers' daughter was expecting her first child.

Myers told prosecutors that if the baby was a boy, he would attend his circumcision even if it conflicted with Myers' scheduled testimony -- unwilling to "let the shooter deprive me" of partaking in a key Jewish rite. Instead, a granddaughter arrived, and Myers was on the witness stand as scheduled.

The lengthy trial concluded with the conviction and death sentence of the gunman, who remains on death row.

With shared trauma, Tree of Life bonds with church shooting survivors

Tree of Life began a meaningful relationship with Mother Emanuel AME Church of Charleston, South Carolina, a historically Black congregation where a racist gunman killed nine Bible study participants in 2015. Members visited each others' congregations, and Myers developed a bond with Emanuel's pastor, the Rev. Eric Manning.

When Myers testified, Manning was in the courtroom. They understand each other. Manning believes it's important to speak out against rising antisemitism and other forms of hatred — a word he refuses to utter, speaking only of "H."

"Antisemitism is the world's oldest disease," he says. "It doesn't require any sort of prescription or inoculation to eliminate. It requires people to honor the worth and dignity of every human being."

Most of the aging and damaged Tree of Life building has been demolished. Plans for a new building, while scaled back from original designs, call for a memorial to the victims, along with antisemitism exhibits, a sanctuary and event space.

The building is slated to open in 2028, says Carole Zawatsky, who heads the nonprofit, The Tree of Life, which is overseeing the project in cooperation with the similarly named congregation.

"The memorial is there to remember each of the 11 victims. To always ground us," Zawatsky says.

Myers was "the right guy at the right time," says Robin Friedman, current president of the congregation. She calls it a "bittersweet" departure.

Recently about 50 Jewish families, many with young children, joined the congregation, bringing their own energy and ideas. That has boosted hopes for the future.

Says Glickman: "We intend not to let the shooter win and not to fade away into history."

Autopsy doctor to testify at hearing on whether D4vd faces trial in 14-year-old's killing

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The doctor who performed the autopsy on 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez is set to give the difficult details of her death Friday at a hearing to determine whether singer D4vd, whose legal name is David Burke, should go on trial in her killing.

The April autopsy report from Dr. Grant Ho of the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner found that Rivas Hernandez's death was a homicide caused by penetrating wounds to her upper body.

The dismembered and decomposing body was discovered in a Tesla towed from the Hollywood Hills in September, 4 1/2 months after the time authorities say Rivas Hernandez was killed.

That meant the autopsy was limited by "extensive postmortem changes." The body had so degraded that examiners couldn't even determine the girl's eye color.

Prosecutors are seeking to prove Burke began sexually abusing Rivas Hernandez when she was 13 and he was 18, then stabbed her to death when she threatened to reveal their long sexual history and crater his career. They allege he dismembered the body in his garage, and a police analyst testified in the preliminary hearing that samples pulled from apparent blood stains there matched the DNA of Rivas Hernandez.

Burke has pleaded not guilty to murder, sexual abuse of a child and mutilation of a body, and his lawyers have said he is innocent.

There is some uncertain language in the autopsy report, which says the wounds "may represent sharp force injuries." The defense, which has been seeking to dismantle the forensic evidence, may seize on this.

One wound on the upper abdomen penetrated the liver, the report said. Another, on the left chest, damaged her ribs. A tube top she was wearing appeared to be cut in three places.

Toxicology tests on Rivas Hernandez's liver showed a low level of alcohol, but it may have been produced postmortem by bacteria and didn't appear to be a factor in her death, the report said.

LA County's Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Odey C. Ukpo gave a statement with the autopsy report objecting to police keeping his office from releasing the results for several months, calling it "unfathomable" that her grieving family would have to wait so long to find out what had happened to her.

In an interview with The Associated Press in June, Ukpo elaborated, saying keeping information sealed "goes completely against our mission."

"It's so important for us to release the information that she did not die from something natural, she did not die from drugs, she was stabbed," Ukpo said. "And then we start to look back at what made her vulnerable to be in that situation."

An indie-pop singer whose music and online presence brought him a huge following, D4vd's songs and videos often have dark and violent imagery often delivered through an alter-ego character he calls Itami. His breakthrough single in 2022 was called "Romantic Homicide," one of several of his songs with more than a billion plays on Spotify.

Canada is ready to celebrate new bridge to US amid tariff troubles with Trump

WINDSOR, Ontario (AP) — Officials are gathering Friday in Ontario to take delight in a new U.S.-Canada bridge over the Detroit River, an international span that is expected to enhance trade on both sides of the border and give travelers another route to both countries.

A ceremony is taking place in Windsor, Ontario, before the Gordie Howe International Bridge opens to traffic Monday. It was supposed to be a celebration on the bridge deck with officials from both countries, but Canada said no to a joint gathering after President Donald Trump this week suddenly announced 50%

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 39 of 73

tariffs on Canadian goods entering the U.S.

"It's regretful that we're at this point in time with our trade relationship. We're hopeful for better days ahead," Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens told WXYZ-TV in Detroit.

More than 70% of Canada's exports go to the U.S., making America its largest trade partner, and Detroit is the No. 1 port for truck traffic on the U.S.-Canada border, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Howe bridge will instantly create competition. For nearly a century, the privately owned Ambassador Bridge has been the only route for large commercial trucks moving between the U.S. and Canada at Detroit.

Detroit Mayor Mary Sheffield said she had been invited to a two-country event Friday before things abruptly changed.

"It will be vital for our economy," Sheffield said of the bridge, sidestepping a question about whether it had become a "political football" in the rocky relationship between the countries.

The bridge is named for Howe, a famous Canadian who played hockey for the NHL's Detroit Red Wings. He died in 2016. Construction, which began in 2018, took years, partly because of a global slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The six-lane bridge is 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) long and stands 151 feet (46 meters) above the Detroit River at its highest point. Pedestrians and bicyclists carrying proper identification will be able to cross it for free in a few weeks.

Canada paid to build the bridge at an estimated cost of \$6.4 billion. A recent agreement says Canada will share some toll revenue with the U.S. government for 15 years. Michigan will also get a share, but not until Canada's costs are recovered, likely decades in the future.

Democrats to finalize their 2028 presidential nominating calendar, led by more diverse states

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats are poised to lock in the party's 2028 presidential nominating schedule on Friday, likely cementing a dramatic break from decades of tradition by keeping Iowa off the top of the calendar and elevating more racially diverse states.

Either South Carolina or Nevada is expected to go first, and each state has aggressively campaigned for the coveted spot.

The decision by the Democratic National Committee's Rules and Bylaws Committee will need to be approved by the full organization, which is scheduled to meet in August.

The overhaul reflects Democrats' effort to give greater influence to states that better mirror the party's diverse coalition, particularly Black and Latino voters, after years of a calendar led by Iowa and New Hampshire, two states with overwhelmingly white electorates.

"I think that it is good that we don't take the order for granted, and just copy and paste it every cycle," said New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a progressive considered a potential 2028 candidate.

The decision will also shape the opening stage of what is expected to be a crowded Democratic presidential primary. Without an incumbent or clear frontrunner, the states that vote first could once again play an outsized role in determining which candidates gain momentum, attract donors and emerge as viable contenders.

Republicans still need to do their calendar. They're expected to stick with their traditional early-state lineup led off by Iowa and New Hampshire.

South Carolina and Nevada compete for the top spot

President Joe Biden successfully pushed to move South Carolina to the front of Democrats' 2024 calendar after the state revived his struggling 2020 presidential campaign. South Carolina has long been the first Southern contest and has served as a key test of candidates' support among Black voters.

But with Democrats now preparing for a wide-open presidential primary, the fight over the calendar has become more contentious.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 40 of 73

In May, Democratic leaders in a handful of southern states lobbied for South Carolina to reprise its role as the party's first-in-the-nation contest holder, arguing in a letter to the DNC that the state best represents the initial playing field for presidential candidates to build the coalitions needed to win and serves as "a moral and political compass for our party and our nation."

Nevada has mounted an equally aggressive campaign, arguing that it better reflects the modern Democratic coalition by combining racial diversity, a strong union presence and battleground-state status.

Nevada has one of the nation's largest Hispanic populations, a sizable Black electorate and is home to the influential Culinary Workers Union, giving candidates an early test with key Democratic constituencies.

"If you want to have a robust indicator of what an American electorate will be like, that will put us in the strongest position to put forth a primary candidate, I think it's pretty clear that Nevada should be first," Nevada Rep. Susie Lee said this week.

Black leaders have pushed back, arguing that moving South Carolina aside after just one cycle would diminish the power of Black voters in the Democratic Party. Roughly one-quarter of South Carolina's population is Black, according to the U.S. Census.

"If South Carolina gets quietly bumped after one cycle of convenient praise, that sends a message louder than any speech at a Democratic dinner: the gratitude was performance, not policy," Rev. Al Sharpton said in a statement.

The DNC has opted to select four early states — one from each region of the country — while also considering whether to add a fifth.

For the Midwest slot, Illinois, Iowa and Michigan submitted bids. Michigan is viewed as a leading contender for the regional position but did not seek the first overall spot.

Order could shape wide-open presidential race

The calendar decision is one of the first major milestones in what's expected to be a tumultuous two-year sprint to the Democratic nomination.

There has not been a truly open Democratic presidential primary — without an incumbent president or a dominant frontrunner — in almost two decades.

Potential White House hopefuls have already begun laying the groundwork in South Carolina. Many have partnered with the state Democratic Party on listening tours, appeared alongside influential Rep. Jim Clyburn at his annual fish fry, spoken at party fundraisers and held meet-and-greet events with activists.

Michigan has also become an increasingly attractive destination for prospective candidates. Former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg moved to the state several years ago and has steadily built political relationships there, making an early Michigan primary a potentially significant boost to his prospects and those of other candidates focused on battleground states.

Tropical Storm Bertha weakens after bringing strong winds and heavy surf to Louisiana and Texas

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

Tropical Storm Bertha brought heavy surf and some flooding to southern Louisiana and Texas as it came ashore on the Gulf Coast for a second time Thursday, hours before weakening to a tropical depression.

The National Hurricane Center said wind gusts of tropical storm force were still possible along the upper Texas coast Thursday evening, and water levels in the area may remain high from storm surge. By late evening, the hurricane center declared Bertha had dissipated.

Its remnants are still expected to produce 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters) of rainfall, with isolated totals up to 4 inches (10.1 centimeters) that could trigger flash flooding in coastal and south Texas, the hurricane center said.

Bertha first grazed southern Louisiana on Wednesday in a slow crawl westward. The storm weakened as it made its second landfall about 75 miles (115 kilometers) northeast of Galveston, Texas, on Thursday afternoon, the National Hurricane Center said. It remained a tropical storm for a few hours before being

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 41 of 73

downgraded to a depression, marked by maximum sustained winds of 38 mph (61 kph) or less.

Thick clouds associated with Bertha prompted SpaceX to call off Thursday evening's planned Starship launch from the southern tip of Texas. The space-skimming test flight was rescheduled for Friday, when the forecast called for clear skies.

No deaths or significant damage have been reported since Bertha formed Monday in the Gulf of Mexico south of the Florida Panhandle. The storm caused some coastal flooding as its center first struck land Wednesday in Louisiana southwest of New Orleans, but its heaviest rains stayed over the Gulf waters.

That rainfall south of the storm's center began moving inland along Texas' southeastern coast Thursday afternoon. Tropical storm force winds on Thursday extended as far as 140 miles (225 kilometers) from the storm's center, the hurricane center said.

A tropical storm warning was discontinued by evening from Sargent, Texas, to the Vermilion and Cameron Parish line in Louisiana.

Galveston businesses stay open as officials predict a 'windy day'

In Galveston, an island city of 53,000 people southeast of Houston, local officials urged residents to brace for a "windy day" and secure any outdoor objects that might become airborne projectiles.

"While no significant impacts are forecast, some gusty storms may blow through the island throughout the day," Galveston's Office of Emergency Management said in a Facebook post Thursday.

The Galveston Historic Seaport canceled its sightseeing boat tours Thursday afternoon as a precaution, but was otherwise operating normally, said employee Jesi Hahn.

"We'll definitely be open," Hahn said. "We usually close for big hurricanes."

At the nearby Harbor House Hotel and Marina, employee Justin Timber said he wasn't aware of any canceled reservations.

"It seems like a normal day," he said. "Restaurants are clicking. Everything's great."

In Florida, storm damages a boardwalk and topples a Waffle House sign

Electrical outages across the Gulf Coast were minimal, according to the website poweroutage.us. Still, Bertha's passage wasn't harmless.

In Pensacola, Florida, officials closed an area around a storm-damaged beach boardwalk, Mayor D.C. Reeves said Thursday on Facebook. He posted a photo showing part of the boardwalk's support structure ripped away and a fence damaged nearby.

Strong gales earlier in the week knocked over a Waffle House sign onto a car in Panama City Beach, Florida. Heavy surf and the threat of rip tides had prompted warnings at Gulf Coast beaches for swimmers to stay out of the water.

Bertha is the second tropical storm of the Atlantic hurricane season. Tropical Storm Arthur in June brought heavy rainfall to the southeastern U.S.

In the eastern Pacific Ocean, Hurricane Fausto churned far from land Thursday. The hurricane was more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) west-southwest of the southern tip of Baja California with maximum sustained winds of 80 mph (130 kph).

The hurricane center said swells generated by Fausto could cause life-threatening surf and rip tides in parts of southern California.

US military launches new strikes on Iran as clashes escalate over shipping routes

By ELENA BECATOROS, FATMA KHALED and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The U.S. military launched the 13th night of strikes Thursday against Iran, targeting key military and commercial sites as clashes continued to escalate over shipping routes. The attacks came after Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they targeted two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, potentially widening the Iran war as international oil topped \$100 a barrel.

Shortly after the new attacks were announced, Iranian state media reported explosions in the port city

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 42 of 73

of Bandar Abbas, a critical hub for moving military supplies as well as trade cargo, where two people were reportedly injured.

Blasts were also reported on Qeshm Island, home to stores of naval assets including drone boats that Iran can use to attack vessels on the Strait of Hormuz, as well as to the northwest near Andimeshk, Omid-yeheh and Firuzabad. Four people were killed and five wounded in a U.S. missile attack on the outskirts of Ahvaz on the Karun River, Iranian state media said.

U.S. Central Command said the latest barrage was designed to "further degrade Iran's ability to threaten civilian mariners and commercial vessels transiting regional waters" as the Americans push to regain control over the strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and gas transited in peacetime. It said the strikes ended shortly before 5 a.m. local time Friday.

Meanwhile, the Houthis threatened to shut down another key trade route, with the world economy already reeling from Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran and the U.S. have stepped up attacks as they vie for control of the strait, setting off a scramble for alternative routes.

President Donald Trump threatened "major military punishment" against the Houthis if their attacks on ships continue.

"If they do this again, the U.S. will hold Iran responsible, in that the Houthis are a Surrogate and/or Proxy of Iran, and major military punishment will be inflicted upon Iran and, of course, the Houthis, themselves," Trump wrote on social media.

As the rhetoric escalated, so did the economic fallout. The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, spiked more than 6% to about \$100 a barrel. That's the highest level since May, before the two sides reached a preliminary peace agreement last month that has since collapsed.

Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi of Iraq, which has close ties to both the U.S. and Iran, was in Tehran on Thursday to call for peace and dialogue, and he promised not to allow Iraqi territory to be used for attacks on Iran, his office said. Al-Zaidi met with Trump earlier this month in Washington.

Houthi attacks are a 'double whammy' on oil shipments

The Houthis' SABA news agency said the rebels had struck two tankers, the Encelia and the Layla, in the Red Sea, causing fires on both. There were no reports of casualties.

It was the first reported Houthi attack on a vessel since they announced a blockade of Saudi-linked shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait earlier this week in retaliation for the kingdom's blockade on Yemen and a recent attack on the international airport in Yemen's rebel-held capital, Sanaa.

Bab el-Mandeb, at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, is a vital shipping chokepoint connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Around 12% of the world's trade, including a fourth of global container traffic, passes through there, moving between Europe and Asia via Egypt's Suez Canal.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency reported an attack set the Encelia ablaze overnight in the Red Sea. It did not mention the Layla.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Center said it received a report of a tanker being struck by "an unknown projectile" 130 kilometers (80 miles) southwest of Al Shuqaiq, Saudi Arabia, in the Red Sea.

The Houthi attacks put at risk oil shipments from Saudi Arabia's Yanbu port on the Red Sea and present a "double whammy" on top of the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, said maritime data and analysis firm Lloyd's List Intelligence.

Saudi Arabia has diverted millions of barrels a day of oil exports to Yanbu via an overland pipeline as the war has bottled up the Persian Gulf.

The Houthi threat "raises questions on the viability of this route," Lloyd's said in slides accompanying an online webinar Thursday.

Both sides dig in over Strait of Hormuz

Iran says it has the right to manage traffic and potentially charge fees in the Strait of Hormuz, which was open to all toll-free before the war. It has attacked ships using a route through the strait that is overseen by U.S. forces and intended to be outside Tehran's control.

Trump said on social media Thursday that sanctioned Iranian funds in the possession of the U.S. will cover the expense of fixing boats damaged in the war.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 43 of 73

"Please let this statement serve to represent, until further notice, that from this point forth, any and all damages done to Ships, Cargo, or anything related thereto, will be paid for by Iranian Money that the United States has in its possession, and controls," Trump said.

It was unclear what legal mechanisms Trump would use to seize and spend the funds, but he said that doing so would be "the fair and equitable thing to do."

Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign minister, said such a seizure of assets would be an "incendiary" precedent.

"Those who celebrate or profit from such funds should remember: once governments normalize confiscation, no one's assets are safe," Abbas Araghchi said on social media early Friday. "Ensuing chaos will not be pretty or peaceful."

In response to Iran's attacks, the U.S. began the widening campaign of strikes across Iran and restored a naval blockade of Iran's ports. U.S. Central Command said it has redirected about a dozen commercial vessels and disabled one since the blockade resumed.

The war of words has also escalated. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran would adopt an "eye for an eye" policy on U.S. strikes against its infrastructure. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio retorted that Trump's policy is "a head for an eye."

"The price will continue to get higher every single night until they come to their senses," Rubio told reporters while traveling in the Philippines for a regional summit.

Iran's health ministry said Thursday that 55 people have been killed and 629 have been wounded since renewed U.S. airstrikes began on June 27.

Iran has responded to U.S. attacks by targeting energy infrastructure and desalination plants providing drinking water in parched neighboring Gulf countries.

Polls have shown the war is unpopular among Americans, a fact reflected in the narrow passage Thursday of a resolution in the U.S. House to halt the war. Though a handful of Republicans crossed party lines to support the measure, the vote remained largely symbolic.

FDA panel narrowly backs unapproved peptide drugs favored by RFK Jr. and wellness influencers

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A panel of federal health advisers on Thursday narrowly recommended easing access to several peptides popular with wellness influencers and celebrities, despite warnings from government scientists that the chemicals haven't been shown to be safe or effective.

In a series of votes, outside experts to the Food and Drug Administration advised the agency to drop current restrictions barring pharmacies from producing injectable peptides with names including BPC-157, TB-500 and KPV.

The panel's vote is not binding but is likely to embolden Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has described himself as a "big fan" of peptides and vowed to overturn FDA restrictions put in place under President Joe Biden.

Across several votes, the panelists voted 8-6, with one abstention, in favor of putting the peptides on FDA's list of substances considered safe for pharmacy compounding. If FDA follows that advice, telehealth companies are expected to ramp up marketing of the chemicals for wellness and cosmetic uses.

Thursday's vote tally reflected the unusual makeup of the panel. Prior to the meeting, more than a half-dozen people with connections to the peptide industry were added to the group, including doctors, pharmacists or consultants who work in the field.

"I voted yes because it's time to put this decision back in the hands of the patient, the physician and the pharmacist," said David Pope, chief pharmacy officer of Xifin Pharmacy Solutions, after the vote on BPC-157.

The panel will vote Friday on three more peptides. The FDA isn't required to follow the group's advice, though it usually does.

FDA scientists remain unconvinced of peptide safety and benefits

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 44 of 73

The positive votes came despite highly critical reviews from FDA staff scientists, who said there was little data that BPC-157, TB-500 and the other chemicals can be safely used for medical purposes.

Panel members with backgrounds in academia, rather than peptides, mostly voted against the substances, which are widely advertised on social media.

"I'm concerned we're responding to a market-induced demand rather than a decision based in solid science," said Dr. Elizabeth Rebello of the University of Texas MD Anderson Center.

Peptide supporters include podcaster Joe Rogan and longevity influencers such as Gary Brecka, a supporter of Kennedy's "Make America Healthy Again" agenda who sells peptides through his website.

But medical experts describe the marketplace as a "Wild West" of unproven, unregulated drugs that could cause serious harm, including infection, allergic reactions or other problems.

"This is really alarming," said Rita Jew, a pharmacist and president of the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, in an interview ahead of the meeting. "There aren't that many other substances people are injecting into themselves where you see that the clinical evidence is so lacking."

In recent years, the FDA has warned Americans about the risks of injecting peptides like BPC-157 and TB-500. In 2023, both were placed on a list of substances considered to be too high-risk for pharmacy compounding. But Kennedy announced their removal from that list earlier this year.

Gap between FDA-approved drugs and wellness peptides is wide

Peptides are the building blocks of more complex proteins, triggering hormones inside the body needed for growth, metabolism and healing. Drug companies have brought several to market as medications, including mainstay treatments for diabetes and weight loss.

But most peptides sold online are promoted for unproven uses, often combined in "stacks," to purportedly heal injuries, build muscle, rejuvenate skin or increase energy.

FDA scientists said they could find little data on the effectiveness of peptides for proposed medical uses like ulcerative colitis, wound healing and opioid addiction.

Five studies of BPC-157 reviewed by the agency "were of short duration, had small sample sizes and evaluated doses that were likely exploratory in nature," the staffers said.

For TB-500, regulators said they could not find any human studies using the compound.

Even determining which form of the peptides should be used was unclear to regulators, since substances like TB-500 aren't recognized as official pharmaceutical ingredients in the U.S.

"There's no way to know what the substance actually is, was or will be tomorrow because that name has no legal meaning," said Russell Wesdyk, an associate director in FDA's drug center.

Peptide supporters push for easier access

The panel votes are only one part of more than 18 hours of discussions and presentations scheduled across two days.

During several public comment periods, the panel heard from more than two dozen speakers — including doctors, lawyers and peptide entrepreneurs — urging that the substances be made more widely available.

Brigham Buhler, a wellness clinic owner whose clients include Rogan and other celebrities, said allowing U.S. pharmacies to compound peptides would steer Americans away from unvetted products imported from China and other foreign countries.

"It's crucial to allow patients to have safe and effective access to these treatment options," Buhler said. "Individuals who have gotten these resources are going to continue to utilize these products."

After the meeting, the FDA will review the votes, discussion and public comments before making a decision on each of the peptides.

FDA-watchers say the most likely outcome may be a temporary policy reassuring pharmacies that they won't be targeted for compounding the peptides under review. Formally placing the substances on FDA's list of drugs that are safe for compounding would require new regulations, which can take months or years to draft.

"We're still going through this process, but I think it's more than likely that the process will end up at the result that Secretary Kennedy wants," said Nathan Beaver, an attorney specializing in FDA issues.

Trump imposes double-digit tariffs on dozens of countries as his 10% levies are set to expire Friday

By PAUL WISEMAN and MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is going ahead with new double-digit tariffs on dozens of U.S. trading partners just as the clock runs out Friday on stopgap levies he imposed after a stinging defeat at the Supreme Court.

The United States will slap taxes of 10% to 12.5% on imports from 60 trading partners accounting for 99% of U.S. imports, charging that they have inadequately enforced bans on goods produced by forced labor.

"The United States has had a forced labor import ban for nearly a century, and rigorously enforces it; it's well past time for our trading partners to do the same," said U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

The new tariffs will take effect just as temporary 10% worldwide tariffs expire at 12:01 a.m. Friday. Trump had turned to those temporary levies after the Supreme Court struck down his biggest and boldest tariffs in February.

Now he's tapping more durable tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which permits the president to impose import taxes and other sanctions against countries found to engage in "unjustifiable," "unreasonable" or "discriminatory" trade practices. Trump used Section 301 to impose big tariffs on China in his first term, and they survived court challenges.

More Section 301 tariffs are likely coming: The U.S. Trade Representative's office has launched a probe into whether 16 countries — accounting for 70% of U.S. imports — have overproduced goods, pushing down prices and putting U.S. companies at a disadvantage in global markets. The administration has yet to complete that investigation.

Trump, who argues that high tariffs will revive American manufacturing, last year overturned decades of U.S. policy that favored lower tariffs and ever-freer trade. Invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, he imposed double-digit tariffs on imports from almost every country on Earth, saying America's longstanding trade deficit amounted to a national emergency.

But the Supreme Court ruled that IEEPA did not authorize tariffs. The decision forced the administration to pay refunds to importers that had paid the tariffs.

In response, Trump announced 10% worldwide tariffs under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. But he can only use Section 122 levies for 150 days; time runs out on them Friday.

The administration initially proposed the forced labor tariffs last month. Since then, some countries have tightened forced labor enforcement and qualified for lower tariffs, said a senior administration official who spoke under condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter. For example, the official said, the tariff on imports from India initially was set at 12.5% but now will be 10%.

Some products — including oil and gas and fertilizer — are exempted from the new tariffs announced Thursday. Also being spared are products that qualify for duty-free status under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the North American trade pact Trump negotiated in his first term.

The tariffs drew immediate fire from critics.

"Today's forced labor justification is too convenient to be taken seriously," said U.S. Rep. Richard Neal of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee. "Forced labor is a real and pervasive problem in our supply chains and demands serious enforcement. It should never be cheapened into a pretext for a tariff policy built on dubious legal theories and personal grievances."

Brazil, which faces a 12.5% forced-labor tariff, called the U.S. move "arbitrary and unjustified" in a statement. It plans to trigger its reciprocity law — which could call for retaliatory tariffs on the United States — and take a complaint to the World Trade Organization. The United States, the Brazilian government said, "chose to manipulate an issue of great importance to human rights and the struggles of workers worldwide in order to accuse 59 countries and the European Union of unfair practices."

Chile's Undersecretary for International Economic Relations Paula Estévez said that the country has "solid

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 46 of 73

labor institutions, a robust regulatory framework and a firm commitment to the prevention and eradication of forced labor." Chile faces a 12.5% rate.

"The Government of Chile considers that the application of this measure to our country is inconsistent with these standards, as well as with the technical, political, and legal background presented throughout the investigation process," she said.

Tariffs are paid by companies in the United States that import foreign products. The importers usually try to pass along the cost by charging consumers higher prices. Americans are already frustrated by the high cost of living. So the administration is taking a risk in rolling out new tariffs ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections.

Human rights watchers say that it's reasonable to be skeptical of the motivation behind the tariffs. But they say the levies could make an impact on the problem of forced labor.

The tariffs are being imposed on countries that the U.S. found either failed to impose or failed to effectively enforce a ban on importing goods made with forced labor.

Forced labor is defined by the International Labor Organization Forced Labor Convention of 1930 as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself (or herself) voluntarily."

According to the latest statistics from the ILO, which is a U.N. agency focused on human and labor rights, about 27.6 million people were in forced labor worldwide on any given day in 2021.

"We've gone on record for years now advocating for import bans, not as a magic bullet, it's not a silver bullet, but as a potentially effective tool in combating forced labor across the globe," said Martina Vandenberg, founder and president of The Human Trafficking Legal Center.

"It's possible to be extremely critical of tariffs, as we are, and to be very concerned about blanket tariffs used as bludgeons against countries," she said. "And yet I think it's undeniable that there is a significant response in terms of the adoption of import bans."

However, Vandenberg and her organization urged in testimony that the tariffs be implemented in a phased approach to give countries time to implement a ban or a plan for enforcement.

"Our concern is that the import bans will be thin slips of paper with no enforcement," she said. "Countries need time to build import ban mechanisms that are meaningful and enforceable."

In a statement, Dominic LeBlanc, the Canada-U.S. Trade Minister, said the move "is not unexpected."

LeBlanc said Canada shares the U.S.'s objective of ensuring that goods produced with forced labor don't enter the supply chain.

"We will continue engaging constructively with the United States on this matter, as well as other outstanding issues, over the coming weeks to the mutual benefit of our citizens," LeBlanc said.

Kenya Davis, partner at Boies Schiller Flexner, said the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a U.S. federal law passed in 2021 that prohibits the importation of goods made wholly or in part in China's Xinjiang region or by designated entities, is the most significant legislation related to forced labor that the U.S. has passed before the tariffs.

"The level of effectiveness is certainly up for debate, but it certainly has drawn attention to the issue of labor trafficking and forced labor," she said. "And so, if nothing else, these import bans will serve that function of bringing greater awareness to forced labor."

But without a "comprehensive approach" that provides transparency about what the investigations consisted of, and programs that provide countries aid in enforcing bans, "I'm very cautious in my enthusiasm about the (tariffs)," she said.

Isabelle Glimcher, senior research scientist for global labor at the NYU Stern Center for Human Rights, said one flaw in the tariffs is that they focus on levying the tax on countries based on goods they import — not goods they make domestically.

But she said the impending tariffs threat has spurred several countries — such as India — to amend their foreign trade policies to include a forced labor import ban. European Union forced labor regulations due to go into effect later next year are also contributing, she said.

"Not all of these things are necessarily or wholly attributable to the Section 301 investigations, but does

seem like countries are responding and starting to take all of this seriously," she said.

Government withdraws subpoenas of 3 reporters for The New York Times after admitting legal errors

By MICHAEL R. SISA, ERIC TUCKER and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Criticized by a federal judge for sloppy legal work, the government on Thursday grudgingly withdrew subpoenas that would have compelled three New York Times reporters to testify about their sources for articles about President Donald Trump's Qatari-gifted Air Force One jet.

The withdrawals in U.S. District Court followed a remarkable back-and-forth between a visibly irritated Judge Arun Subramanian and government lawyers. They come at a time when the Trump administration is vigorously going after news organizations whose reporting and coverage it doesn't like — and also trying to crack down on leaks inside the government.

The government's turnabout in the face of vigorous legal opposition and a stern reprimand from a judge marked the latest instance of the Justice Department making aggressive moves to compel journalists to identify their sources before a grand jury — only to later retreat. The administration recently withdrew similar subpoenas that sought to compel testimony from journalists for The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal related to separate national security coverage.

Subramanian said he otherwise would have granted the newspaper's request to reject the subpoenas because regulations pertaining to subpoenas served on journalists maintain that they should be issued as a last resort in an investigation.

"Subpoenas are the last step, not the first step, but the last step," the judge said, citing rules set to protect against violations of the First Amendment. He said the government's actions had turned the law and the regulations "on its head."

"When you see something like this, if this were a civil proceeding, what I would normally do is ask the parties to show causes why sanctions should not be issued," the judge said, referencing punishment for lawyers for egregious actions.

After the hearing, the Justice Department lashed out at Subramanian in a statement, saying he "threatened our attorneys with sanctions unless subpoenas were withdrawn, and blocked us from presenting the meticulous process of this investigation."

"The grand jury has a right to hear testimony from all material witnesses in a federal criminal investigation. This judge's conduct overrides clear longstanding principles and common sense — blocking the grand jury from receiving core evidence in a national security investigation," the statement said.

"Make no mistake," it added, "this investigation remains ongoing, and we will pursue justice against those threatening national security by leaking classified information, a serious federal crime."

Government attorneys upbraided by judge

Subramanian noted that with protections for journalists at stake, the government was required to ensure it could not obtain what it needed from any other sources before issuing subpoenas to journalists.

A Justice Department lawyer, Sean Buckley, cast the government's missteps as inadvertent errors and said: "No one was trying to pull a fast one." Buckley apologized for other subpoenas that sought records for phone numbers belonging to one reporter's mother and two of the journalists' spouses.

"That was an error, judge, which we own," Buckley said. "It was a consequence of trying to move quickly."

"These things are starting to pile up," Subramanian said, becoming increasingly testy.

The hearing was held publicly despite efforts by the Trump administration to keep secret the litigation spawned by subpoenas it served on the Times' journalists to try to get them to divulge their sources.

The newspaper's lawyers had challenged the validity of the grand jury subpoenas, along with subpoenas issued for phone records of several Times journalists and some of their relatives. Senior Times officials, including the paper's managing editor and general counsel, sat in the gallery watching during Thursday's proceedings.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 48 of 73

The request for phone records raised questions about the extent of the investigation being carried out by the Justice Department.

David McCraw, the Times' chief newsroom lawyer, said after the hearing in a statement that it "was an important affirmation of our country's commitment to a free press."

"We are pleased that the government finally conceded that the subpoenas violated the law, but they should never have been issued in the first place," he said. "We will not be deterred in the face of tactics like these."

Court action comes after reporting on new Air Force One jet

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

The Times, citing anonymous sources, reported that the switch had come at the urging of the Secret Service and that the newer plane lacked some of the advanced security features of the older Air Force One aircraft, including antimissile capabilities. On social media, Trump rejected claims of security concerns.

The Times wrote in a letter to the judge several days ago that two subpoenas seek records beginning on Jan. 1, long before the newspaper published articles on July 8 and July 9 that became the basis for the grand jury subpoenas.

It said that lengthy stretch of records sought would indicate that the purpose of the subpoenas might have been "to forage for information about the Journalists' source relationships more broadly."

The Times argued for the phone records subpoenas to be disallowed on the grounds that the government had acted in "bad faith" and ignored its own protocols by not giving the journalists advance notice that records were being sought and by demanding the information "without first conducting any serious investigation."

The Justice Department has justified the grand jury subpoenas by saying that "reporters are not the targets, those leaking classified information are." The department also said it had complied with its own regulations in issuing the subpoenas and had taken "certain" investigative steps before seeking them. It said it was authorized to delay disclosure of the phone records subpoenas but decided to alert the journalists' lawyers "so that counsel could advance any arguments—regardless of merit—in furtherance of their motion."

In fighting the subpoenas, the Times' lawyers highlighted how the government's carelessness could have exposed sensitive information that had nothing to do with the journalists. The mother whose phone records were mistakenly sought is a mental health professional with confidential client relationships and one of the two spouses is the general counsel of a law firm, the lawyers said.

At Thursday's hearing, a final rebuke from the judge to the government came when he asked its lawyers to assure him that it won't repeat a scenario that left one journalist being served a subpoena by an FBI agent while he was home watching the family-friendly movie "The Sheep Detectives," about sheep on a quest to solve the murder of their shepherd.

Said the judge, to loud courtroom laughter: "I can't think of anything more inconsistent with 'Sheep Detective' than an FBI agent showing up at your door."

Trump fetes Dodgers at the White House again, saying the team is 'one of the great brands'

By WILL WEISSERT and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump feted Shohei Ohtani, Freddie Freeman and the World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers at the White House on Thursday, calling the team "one of the great brands anywhere in the world" during a Rose Garden event celebrating its second title in as many years.

Trump said the Dodgers edging the Toronto Blue Jays in Game 7 last fall capped "a hell of a series." He indicated he was surprised to learn that the Dodgers had never before won consecutive titles but also mused about a third in a row.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 49 of 73

"I'm thrilled to say welcome back to the White House," he said. "And maybe I'll see you again next year."

The president saluted the team in the East Room in April 2025 to mark their 2024 World Series championship over the New York Yankees. He said before the latest event that he was most excited about meeting Ohtani, whom he compared at length to the legendary Babe Ruth — even saying the Dodgers star was arguably the best hitter and pitcher in baseball.

"It's truly a great — when you talk about a brand — it's one of the great brands anywhere in the world," Trump said of the Dodgers. He spoke in front of a table with two World Series trophies and a Trump 47 jersey, which the team presented to him.

The Dodgers also gave Trump what looked like a replica of a World Series ring. That prompted Trump to exclaim: "Wow. Do I have to report this? I don't want to report this" before slipping the ring into the inside pocket of his suit jacket.

Trump says Iran war has kept him from following baseball closely

Those in the crowd wore blue Dodgers caps to guard against bright overhead sun, and the band played a jazzy instrumental version of Randy Newman's "I Love LA" before Trump took the stage.

Trump described last year's World Series' epic Game 3 during which the Dodgers won 6-5 in 18 innings. Trump said he stayed up until around 3 a.m. to watch, noting that "it was a long one, but it was amazing."

"I thought it was a game that you were going to lose about four or five times, and you ended up winning," he said, adding, "Luck is OK, too, right?" Dodgers manager Dave Roberts agreed: "Luck is OK."

"But with talent you get a lot of luck," Trump continued.

The president said he spoke briefly with Roberts before the event and learned that his team currently has the best record in baseball, noting, "I've been a little busy with Iran and some other things."

That was his only reference during the event to fighting in the Middle East, which has escalated on both sides in recent days.

Roberts also spoke briefly, saying, "We're going for a three-peat."

Championship baseball teams have been coming to the White House since 1869, when President Ulysses S. Grant hosted the Cincinnati Red Stockings. They were the first fully professional team to visit the White House and went undefeated that season, though the World Series wasn't established in its modern form until 1903.

Sports teams' visits to the Trump White House have sometimes been a source of controversy. In 2018, the president rescinded an invitation to the Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles after many players suggested they might skip such a trip.

Dodgers star right fielder Mookie Betts wasn't at Thursday's Rose Garden event, though he did make the 2025 visit. He said he prefers to spend the team's scheduled days off with his family.

The Dodgers originally considered coming to the White House this past April during a series with the Washington Nationals, but a crowded early season schedule didn't permit that. Instead, they're in the nation's capital during the off-day between a just-completed series against the Philadelphia Phillies and Friday's opener against the New York Mets in Queens.

The White House has changed since the Dodgers' last visit

Over the past year, Trump has revamped the Rose Garden and added a patio area reminiscent of his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida. At Thursday's event for the Dodgers, he referenced the "Walk of Fame" installed on the colonnade, which features plaques of past presidents along with partisan insults against Joe Biden and other Democrats.

"I could put some of the great Dodgers on the wall," Trump joked, "but I figured maybe it's more appropriate that we put the presidents."

Trump, a baseball fan and New York native, has for years been closely associated with the Yankees, whose late, longtime owner George Steinbrenner was a close friend. Trump referenced Steinbrenner on Thursday, saying, "He would do anything to win" before telling the Dodgers' team owners, "But you're doing the same thing."

The president isn't always so complimentary of teams, though. During a rally in Georgia on Wednesday,

he praised the ownership of the local Atlanta Braves and slammed the Mets for their sky-high payroll and losing record.

Trump was joined on stage during that event by former Braves manager Brian Snitker, and Mike Plant, president and CEO of the Braves Development Company.

"You know, the Mets have the highest salary in baseball, and they lose all the time," Trump said then. And I'm like, maybe we can steal this guy."

"There are teams like that, where they never go down," Trump said. "Then you have other teams — 'We're rebuilding.' They've been rebuilding for years. I don't want to mention teams 'cause I know all the owners. They're all friends of mine."

Man who killed Minnesota lawmaker Melissa Hortman sentenced to life as family describes trauma, loss

By ELLEN SCHMIDT and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Friends and family of Minnesota Democratic lawmaker Melissa Hortman said the man sentenced Thursday to two life terms plus 40 years after pleading guilty to her murder failed to eliminate her legacy but caused enduring fear and fury as he changed their lives forever.

Fellow lawmakers and survivors of the shooting spoke Thursday at the sentencing hearing for Vance Boelter, the man who pleaded guilty last month to federal charges related to the killing of former House Speaker Hortman and her husband, Mark, as well as critically wounding state Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette.

Boelter, 59, agreed to plead guilty in June, almost a year after the Minneapolis-area attacks, so federal prosecutors would not seek the death penalty. Mark Hortman's father and siblings voiced anger that he could not be sentenced to death.

U.S. District Judge John R. Tunheim said it was "the longest sentence I have imposed after hearing thousands of cases over the years, but I do believe it is deserved."

Victims and survivors describe the impact of the attacks

In court Thursday, Sen. Hoffman said he and his family are constantly reminded of the extraordinary violence of that night, even in the mundane details of day-to-day life. He said they don't receive mail at home anymore, they have installed solid steel doors for protection, and they have changed how they do everyday tasks because of their injuries.

"The defendant looked me in the eyes and pulled the trigger. The defendant looked at my wife and chose to do the same," Hoffman said. "My wife and I now live with injuries. We live with our bodies remembering the gunfire."

Yvette Hoffman said she has been too traumatized to work since the attack in their home, and that she sees a therapist weekly.

"I will never forget looking down and watching my blood slowly stream down that white washing machine as I felt myself sinking to the floor," she said, barely holding back tears. "We always have an escape plan now. This isn't how people should live."

Boelter admitted in court last month that he spent months identifying and stalking his targets before driving to their homes disguised as a police officer with the intention of killing them. The killings sparked the largest police search in state history.

Democratic State Rep. Kristin Bahner was one of two other legislators whose homes Boelter visited that night, but she and her family were on vacation. Bahner said the shootings had left her shaken.

"I could not fathom why I was spared and (Hortman) was not," she said. "You failed because I carry her with me. In my mind and in my heart, she guides me."

The proposed sentence sparks fury

Mark Hortman's parents and siblings spoke of their anger Thursday, both at the man who killed him and the justice system.

"It will not offer me peace of mind that he will have room and board provided for the rest of his life,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 51 of 73

paid for by my tax dollars," said Lisa Hortman Bean, Mark's sister.

Melissa Hortman's mother and father and the Hortman's children changed the tone of the statements when they spoke, remembering them as attentive, loving parents and grandparents and people who had a positive impact on thousands of lives.

Sophie Hortman, their daughter, described in vivid detail having to say goodbye to Gilbert, the golden retriever, also shot by Boelter but who was still alive when they arrived at the veterinary hospital. She talked about the bedtime routine her mother had with Gilbert, who failed his service dog test because he was too friendly, and the care and love she gave him.

"I miss my mom. I miss my dad. I miss my best friends. And I miss believing in the goodness of humanity. I hope that one day these aches feel less sharp. And I know just like the love I feel for my parents, the pain will never go away," she said through tears.

Colin Hortman talked about his parents not being at his recent wedding, about not dancing with his mother who he had hoped would make his wedding cake. He described the horror of the house and the panic attacks and crying that have persisted in the year since they were killed.

"My days are filled with gray, and the blood that was spilled is the last thing I see before I go to sleep and the first thing I see when I wake," he said. "There is no sentence that weighs 15 gunshots, a murdered dog and the rest of my life."

"It is impossible to realize the damage that has been done not only to our family, but to our society," said Melissa's father Harold Haluptzok, who repeatedly referred to her as his "little girl."

"I wish the perpetrator would have sat down and talked to Melissa about his political positions. ... if only he did that before he decided to kill them," Haluptzok added.

Defense attorney says Boelter has remorse

Federal defender Manny Atwal spoke only briefly after the victim impact statements Thursday, saying Boelter showed remorse for his actions by pleading guilty and accepting the life sentences.

Boelter remained silent and sat extremely still for most of the hearing, showing little emotion or reaction to the anguish expressed by the survivors and family members.

"To every person I have caused loss, pain, heartache, confusion, sadness, shame or loneliness, I am truly sorry," Boelter said.

Boelter pretended to be a police officer to gain access

Boelter went to Hortman's home, wearing a tactical uniform and mask, about 3:30 a.m. on June 14, 2025. He rang the doorbell while shouting he was a police officer doing a welfare check, according to court documents.

Mark Hortman answered the door. Boelter gave him a fake name and badge number before requesting he summon Melissa Hortman to the door as well. He shot Mark Hortman multiple times before pushing into the house and shooting the lawmaker as she fled upstairs. Melissa and Mark Hortman were killed.

Boelter had already visited the Hoffmans' home that night, shooting and critically injuring the senator and his wife, according to police and court documents. Court documents said Boelter also went to Bahner's house that night as well as the home of another lawmaker.

Boelter also faces state charges, including two counts of murder, four counts of attempted murder, impersonating a police officer and animal cruelty. Hoffman and his family filed a personal injury lawsuit against Boelter in April.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said in a statement Thursday that Boelter's state prosecution would move forward immediately noting a first appearance is scheduled for Aug. 3.

"The targeted political violence he committed was horrific," Moriarty wrote. "My thoughts are with Melissa and Mark's family, as well as John, Yvette, and Hope, as the state prosecution moves forward."

Salman Rushdie testifies at the terrorism trial of the man convicted of stabbing him

By JOHN WAWROW and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Four years after being stabbed on an amphitheater stage, Salman Rushdie sat across a courtroom from his convicted attacker Thursday and told jurors for a second time about the ambush that nearly killed him.

The prize-winning writer recalled feeling what he thought was a punch under his chin, then feeling blood coming from his neck.

Soon "I was on the stage, lying down, with an enormous pool of blood all around me," Rushdie testified. "It was an enormous and expansive lake of blood."

A Buffalo federal court jury watched Rushdie fixedly as he testified — and at one point removed his glasses to show his now sightless right eye — at Hadi Matar's terrorism trial. He has pleaded not guilty.

Matar already was convicted of a state-level attempted murder charge in the 2022 attack at a cultural institution where Rushdie was poised to speak about threats to writers and artists. Federal prosecutors say Matar was acting on such a threat — an Iranian leader's 1989 call for Rushdie's death because of his novel "The Satanic Verses."

"I can't say what his ambitions or his aim was, but the wounds were dispersed across my body," Rushdie testified.

Rushdie: Knife came 'a millimeter from my brain'

Rushdie, 79, was composed and straightforward during little more than an hour on the witness stand. He outlined the attack — which blinded him in the right eye, damaged his liver, paralyzed his left hand for a time and briefly put him on a ventilator — and his lengthy recuperation and enduring injuries.

"The knife was a millimeter from my brain," said Rushdie, whose attacker climbed on stage, approached from behind him and then slashed the author 15 times as the Chautauqua Institution audience gasped. Spectators and another speaker, Henry Reese, scrambled to aid Rushdie and restrain Matar, who was arrested by law enforcement assigned to the event. Rushdie has described the stabbing and recovery previously during Matar's earlier trial, in a memoir and in interviews with The Associated Press and other outlets.

As Rushdie testified, Matar, 28, looked down at the defense table, sometimes rested his hand on his chin or turned to speak to his lawyer, looking toward the author only as Rushdie walked out a door. The writer glanced at Matar fleetingly, if at all.

Defense lawyer asks Rushdie about book's blowback

Matar's defense has argued that prosecutors can't prove his intent or mindset at the time of the attack — a key element in their claim that it was an act of terrorism motivated by allegiance to Iran's government and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group. Matar, currently serving a 25-year state prison sentence, faces a potential life sentence if convicted of federal charges that include engaging in an act of transnational terrorism.

When defense lawyer Nathaniel Barone asked whether Rushdie believed the defendant had ties to terrorism, the author replied: "I had no knowledge, but I had my suspicions."

Iran's late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued the 1989 fatwa, or religious edict, calling for Rushdie to be killed over "The Satanic Verses," which includes a dream sequence about Islam's Prophet Muhammad that some Muslims considered blasphemous. The novel sparked often-violent protests against Rushdie, who was born into a Muslim family, and the fatwa drove him into hiding for years. He gradually emerged after the Iranian government distanced itself from the order in 1998, though the fatwa was never officially repealed.

"For two decades or more, I led a public life without a hint of trouble," Rushdie testified Thursday.

Barone repeatedly asked Rushdie whether he had anticipated blowback from the book.

"Probably, but I don't believe the book to be on trial here. I believe someone else is on trial," Rushdie said. At Barone's request, the judge struck the comment from the court transcript.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 53 of 73

Matar may testify, lawyer says

Prosecutors say Matar was animated partly by comments that a former Hezbollah leader, the late Hassan Nasrallah, made about Rushdie and the fatwa in 2006. The U.S.-born Matar also holds citizenship in Lebanon, where Hezbollah is based, and Matar's mother has said a 2018 trip there left him moody and withdrawn.

Matar started researching Rushdie in 2020 and eventually wrote to himself, "We need to kill him ASAP," Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy Lynch said in an opening statement Wednesday. Matar cast the killing as part of what he considered a jihad, or holy war, Lynch said.

Matar's New Jersey bedroom and electronics held photos and other material showing his regard for Hezbollah, and he carried a fake driver's license with a name similar to that of a Hezbollah figure, said Lynch. The U.S. government designates Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

Matar's lawyer has said the government is asking jurors "to connect the dots" in a case without hard evidence about what he was thinking on the date of the attack. In a seeming effort to scrutinize how much the fatwa was on anyone's mind by Aug. 12, 2022, the defense also has asked some witnesses about the relatively light security around Rushdie that day. A state trooper and a sheriff's deputy were assigned to the event.

Matar declined to testify at his state court trial but may do so at the federal trial, Barone said outside court Thursday.

Rushdie was born in India, raised in Britain and is now a U.S. citizen. He won the Booker Prize in 1981 for his novel "Midnight's Children." His most recent work is "The Eleventh Hour," a book of short stories and novellas published last year.

Iran's government denied involvement in the 2022 stabbing, but its Foreign Ministry's then-spokesperson suggested Rushdie invited trouble by insulting Islam. Hezbollah's Nasrallah did not comment on the attack.

US health officials are investigating a new outbreak of a diarrhea-causing parasite

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

Federal health officials are investigating a new outbreak involving the diarrhea-causing parasite cyclospora. The outbreak included 72 people as of Wednesday.

The Food and Drug Administration has not yet identified which products are linked to the illnesses. Officials also have not said where the cases are located.

"This is an active investigation, and officials are working together to determine the specific cause of illnesses in this cluster," the Department of Health and Human Services said in an email Thursday.

Federal officials earlier this week said they remained focused on lettuce from Taylor Farms as the source of a separate, multistate outbreak. The company last week announced it was recalling iceberg lettuce grown in central Mexico.

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that infects food that has come into contact with human feces, most commonly when produce is irrigated or washed with contaminated water. When ingested, the parasite causes intestinal illness marked by "frequent and sometimes explosive bowel movements," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Federal and state health authorities have been investigating separate clusters of cyclospora illnesses, including the one traced to Taylor Farms.

Food safety tips include washing hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before handling food. Experts say cooking can kill the parasite and advise cooking produce to a temperature of at least 158 degrees Fahrenheit (70 degrees Celsius.)

Trump adds new condition to Saudi nuclear deal, says kingdom must normalize relations with Israel

By AAMER MADHANI, COLLIN BINKLEY and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday appeared to add a condition to the newly signed agreement with Saudi Arabia for a civilian nuclear program, saying the deal would require the kingdom to normalize its relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords.

When the deal was announced Wednesday, neither the U.S. Energy Department nor the Saudi government made any mention of it being contingent on the kingdom's relations with Israel.

Trump's social media post a day later asserting that the agreement was subject to the Saudis joining the accords was unexpected and almost certain to complicate any final approval. The accords approved in 2020 expanded the number of Arab and Muslim-majority nations with diplomatic ties with Israel.

Getting Saudi Arabia to join would be a monumental diplomatic achievement. The Saudis have previously made clear that normalizing relations with Israel would first require the establishment of a clear path for Palestinian statehood. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected the idea of Palestinian statehood as being untenable for his country's security.

The Republican president also said the pact does not allow for enrichment of uranium. Nonproliferation experts have raised concerns that the deal fails to include guardrails to prevent enrichment of uranium to weapons-grade levels.

Trump said the agreement "will be approved, but is totally subject to Saudi Arabia joining the very respected and successful Abraham Accords." He added that the U.S. "is not opposed to Civil (Non-Enriched) Nuclear Facilities."

When asked by a reporter why the condition was not mentioned in the initial announcement, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the president was the "final dealmaker" and has called on Saudi Arabia to join the accords "on numerous occasions."

The Saudi Embassy in Washington declined to comment Thursday on Trump's assertions about the deal.

Netanyahu's office in a statement applauded the prospect of Saudi Arabia joining the accords as a "historic leap forward for peace in the Middle East." The statement made no mention of the deal to bolster Saudi's civil nuclear program.

President has sought to build on the accords

Trump has sought to build on the accords, which also formalized commercial ties between Israel and some Arab and Muslim-majority nations. Saudi Arabia is the most important Arab power in the Middle East, and Trump believes the kingdom joining the accords is critical to establishing long-term stability in the region.

The new nuclear deal is expected to last 30 years and involve U.S. firms in the program's development. The agreement could allow for the building of a uranium-enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia following a joint U.S.-Saudi study, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The pact is to be submitted to Congress for review, according to the U.S. and Saudi governments.

The deal does not include the International Atomic Energy Agency's "additional protocol," which would allow for more monitoring, inspections and verification, according to a second person familiar with the agreement.

The oil-rich kingdom's Energy Ministry on Wednesday said the agreement bolsters "efforts to diversify energy sources, advance cutting-edge technologies, and expand opportunities for cooperation and investment in ways that serve the mutual interests of the two friendly countries."

Enrichment is not an automatic path to a nuclear weapon — a nation also must master other steps, including the use of synchronized high explosives, for instance. But it does open the door to weaponization, which has fueled concerns over Iran's program.

Administration says deal is good for US firms

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters Thursday in the Philippine capital of Manila that the agreement would make certain that Saudi Arabia works with American companies instead of "competitors" to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 55 of 73

build its civil nuclear program. China, South Korea, France and Russia are among alternative partners that Riyadh could look to.

"We're not the only show in town, but we're the best show in town," Rubio said. "We want to make sure that it's our companies they're picking."

Trump has talked up his push to extend the accords, but the aftermath of Israel's war in Gaza and the nearly 5-month-old U.S. and Israel war against Iran have complicated his efforts.

The agreements have proven unpopular in certain signatory countries such as Morocco and Bahrain, sparking widespread protests.

Still, the Trump administration remains optimistic that an agreement with Saudi Arabia on joining the accords can be sealed by the end of Trump's second term.

Deal faces early scrutiny from Congress, Israel and nuclear experts

The White House and Saudi Arabia have not made public the text of the nuclear cooperation agreement, known as a "123 agreement," alongside what the Trump administration described as a "bilateral safeguards agreement" that was signed Wednesday by U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Minister of Energy Abdulaziz bin Salman.

But it already faces scrutiny from Congress, some Israeli officials and nuclear experts.

As details of the deal emerged Wednesday, opposition on Capitol Hill and elsewhere began to snowball, with Republicans and Democrats both questioning the wisdom of the agreement. In addition, conservative commentators who have generally supported Trump's policies asked why the president would give Saudi Arabia such a deal without getting anything in return.

Then on Thursday, Trump abruptly announced that the deal is contingent on the Saudis joining the accords.

The United Arab Emirates, a neighbor to Saudi Arabia, signed a 123 agreement with the U.S. to build its Barakah nuclear power plant with South Korean assistance. But the UAE did so without seeking enrichment, something nonproliferation experts have held up as the "gold standard" for nations wanting atomic power.

Rubio, as a Republican senator representing Florida, backed a bipartisan 2018 proposal that called for requiring Congress to approve any 123 agreement with Saudi Arabia. The bill was reintroduced by a group of Democratic lawmakers in March but has not passed into law.

Brent oil tops \$100 per barrel, as tumbles for Tesla and Alphabet yank Wall Street lower

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Brent oil shot to its highest price since May after increased fighting in the Middle East on Thursday threatened to slow the global flow of crude. At the same time, sharp drops for two of Wall Street's most influential companies, Alphabet and Tesla, yanked the U.S. stock market to its worst loss in a month.

The S&P 500 fell 1.2% and is on track for its first back-to-back weekly loss since March. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 506 points, or 1%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 2.2%.

Stocks fell under the pressure of rising oil prices, which raise costs for businesses and erode their customers' ability to spend. The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil, the international standard, jumped 7% to settle at \$100.69.

It touched \$102 during the day, the highest price since May for the most actively traded Brent contract in the market. The cause: attacks on two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea. That threatens another avenue that oil companies use to move their crude from the Middle East to customers worldwide, along with the Strait of Hormuz.

Underscoring the importance of the sea route for the economy, President Donald Trump threatened "major military punishment" against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are backed by Iran, if they keep attacking ships.

It was just a few weeks ago that Brent had dropped below \$72 per barrel, roughly back to where it was before the United States and Israel attacked Iran to begin their war, on hopes that a wind-down in the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 56 of 73

war would fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The jumps in oil prices will worsen inflation, just when it had begun to decelerate by more than economists expected. That in turn could push the Federal Reserve and other central banks to raise interest rates, which would slow economies and undercut prices for stocks and other investments.

The European Central Bank held its main interest rates steady at its meeting Thursday. But traders are betting on a 36% chance the Fed will hike the federal funds rate at its meeting next week. That's up from the nearly 12% probability seen a week ago, according to data from CME Group.

An increase by the Fed would be the first since 2023.

Higher oil prices pushed the yield of the 10-year Treasury up to 4.69% from 4.67% late Wednesday and from just 3.97% before the war with Iran began. That's a significant increase, and it's already brought long-term U.S. mortgage rates to their highest levels in nearly a year.

Gasoline prices tend to follow oil prices higher, and a gallon of regular costs an average of \$4.09 across the United States, according to AAA. That's still below highs of roughly \$4.56 in May, but it was at just \$3.93 a month ago.

On Wall Street, stocks of companies with big fuel bills fell to sharp losses on worries about higher expenses.

American Airlines fell 8.4% even though it reported a much bigger profit for the spring than analysts expected, something that usually sends a stock's price higher. It raised fares, which helped it offset its higher fuel prices, during the latest quarter.

Southwest Airlines lost 6.2%, even though it also reported better profit and revenue than analysts expected.

One of the heaviest weights on the U.S. stock market was Tesla, which tumbled 14.5% after Elon Musk's electric-vehicle company reported a weaker profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Because it's one of the largest stocks in the S&P 500 by market value, its stock has more influence on the index than nearly every other.

One of the few that's larger is Alphabet, and its stock fell 7.1% even though the parent company of Google delivered stronger profit and revenue than analysts expected.

Investors focused instead on how much Alphabet is planning to spend on artificial-intelligence investments. Alphabet raised its forecast for capital spending over the full year after its investments last quarter doubled to nearly \$45 billion from a year earlier.

CEO Sundar Pichai said AI helped its cloud revenue growth accelerate to 82% last quarter, but unease nevertheless remains about whether all the money going into AI will pay off in terms of productivity and profits.

Such worries have been shaking the AI industry broadly in recent weeks, leading to big swings for the overall stock market.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 90.66 points to 7,408.30. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 506.93 to 51,711.65, and the Nasdaq composite sank 553.21 to 25,137.69.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell sharply in Europe after oil prices jumped. France's CAC 40 dropped 1.6% for one of the larger losses.

Indexes in Asia were stronger earlier in the day, and South Korea's Kospi jumped 4.4%.

House Republican says Smith may have lied about Trump probe and refers him for possible prosecution

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key Republican lawmaker says he believes that special counsel Jack Smith may have made false statements to Congress while testifying about his investigation of President Donald Trump and that the Justice Department should consider prosecuting him. Lawyers for Smith deny the allegation and say he testified truthfully.

Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, referred Smith to the Justice

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 57 of 73

Department for possible prosecution related to closed-door testimony about whether he had obtained records of lawmakers while investigating Trump's efforts to overturn his 2020 presidential election loss.

The referral, sent Wednesday, centers on a December 2025 exchange in which Smith was asked about subpoenas that prosecutors had issued for the toll records of some Republican lawmakers as part of the investigation. Toll records show the time, date, length of call and phone numbers involved but do not reveal the content of the communication.

"Did the toll records that you requested from the senators, did they include the content of the phone calls?" Smith was asked.

"No," he said. He again answered no when asked whether the toll records he had requested included the content of text messages.

Jordan, in his referral, says that answer was misleading in light of newly released records from Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa showing that Smith had obtained the contents of 44 lawmakers' text messages in a separate subpoena to the National Archives and Records Administration that sought the communications of various Trump advisers and aides.

"The responses provided by Mr. Smith gave the impression that neither Mr. Smith nor his team had access to the content of Members' privileged text messages," Jordan wrote. "We now know this to be false."

He said a false statement can encompass instances in which "the witness provides a half-truth or excludes information necessary to make statements accurate."

Lawyers for Smith called that a "dangerous theory of criminal liability" that has "no limiting principle and risks ensnaring every witness who testifies before a congressional committee who does not proactively disclose information that is not responsive to a question asked (i.e. every witness)."

Smith's lawyers defend his veracity

In a letter to Jordan and Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, Smith's lawyers called his answers "unimpeachably truthful" and noted that he was responding to questions explicitly about toll records, which did not include the contents of any text messages.

"The toll record subpoenas that were the focus of those questions did not call for the content of text messages," wrote Smith's lawyers, Peter Koski and Lanny Breuer. "The questions and answers preceding and following these exchanges also make clear that the focus of the questions was on the toll records subpoenas. Notably, the referral letter does not contest the truthfulness of Mr. Smith's answers."

Raskin said in his own statement that House Republicans had "embarrassed themselves" with the referral and that Smith answered accurately when asked if the toll records subpoenas sought the content of lawmakers' communications. He said Republicans were faulting Smith for not volunteering information he was not asked.

"Wishing that you had asked different questions while you had the opportunity to examine a witness is not a proper basis for a referral of a witness for criminal prosecution. Congressional Republicans never asked Jack Smith about presidential records," Raskin wrote. "Not during his 9-hour closed-door testimony or his 4-hour public hearing."

A criminal referral to the Justice Department from Congress or any other party has no legal authority and does not compel prosecutors to act. But the department under the Trump administration has proved to be eager to investigate and in some cases prosecute foes of the president. Smith is certainly one such adversary, with Trump having called him "deranged" and urging his prosecution.

"During his testimony, Mr. Smith provided truthful, responsive answers and candidly discussed his work as Special Counsel," Smith's lawyers wrote. "This referral reflects a chilling eagerness to weaponize the justice system by attacking a career, nonpartisan public servant who faithfully and fearlessly performed his duties by following the facts and the law."

The Justice Department in a statement Wednesday night confirmed receipt of the referral and said it "will investigate all evidence of criminal conduct."

Smith charged Trump with conspiring to undo the election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden and with hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, after his first term in the White House. Smith abandoned both prosecutions after Trump's election win in November 2024, citing

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 58 of 73

longstanding Justice Department opinions that say sitting presidents cannot face federal indictment.

Smith resigned from the Justice Department in early 2025, 10 days before Trump was inaugurated again.

Gas, groceries and back-to-school items are where shoppers might see higher oil prices surface

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ, MAE ANDERSON and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Already feeling pinched since the start of the Iran war, consumers are likely to feel more pain ahead as oil prices pushed past \$100 a barrel Thursday amid renewed fighting and military strikes that have left global oil supplies stranded in the Middle East.

The elevated price marked a turn from lower oil prices enjoyed briefly when hostilities between the U.S. and Iran waned in June. Brent crude, the international standard, last reached \$100 a barrel in May.

Companies that produce and sell fresh food, school supplies and anything that gets shipped using fuel reported cost impacts from an earlier spike in energy prices after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran. They're likely to continue passing some of their increased expenses to consumers.

"Since everything relies on petroleum in our economy, for good or ill, if the cost of petroleum goes up, then everything else goes up as well," said Joe Adamski, a managing director at procurement services company ProcureAbility.

Here's how higher oil prices could put more strain on the finances of U.S. consumers.

Gasoline prices return to \$4 or more in most states

Volatility along the Strait of Hormuz and broader regional instability pushed up the price of crude oil, the main ingredient in gasoline, and could continue to make driving costlier during the second half of summer, according to motor club AAA.

The U.S. price for regular gasoline averaged \$4.09 a gallon Thursday, 15 cents more than a week ago, and drivers in most states were paying \$4 or more, according to AAA.

"Given the typical lag along the oil industry's supply chain, prices at the pump are poised to keep rising at least into next week," said Pavel Molchanov, an investment strategy analyst at investment bank Raymond James.

Molchanov, noted that futures prices for oil delivered later this year and next year were lower, suggesting prices could fall once military action ends.

For the most part, higher gasoline prices haven't stopped Americans from driving. Gasoline demand rose 1% to 8.9 million barrels per day last week, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Shoppers are paying more for a bag of groceries

Grocery prices generally rise with oil because farmers use diesel fuel to power equipment, while many food products are transported by trucks that require fuel.

"Oil at \$100 doesn't make food prices jump right away, but it does put upward pressure across the food supply chains, especially for categories that depend heavily on trucking, cold storage and packaging," said Miguel Gomez, a Cornell University professor who directs the school's Food Industry Management Program. Fresh produce and dairy could feel a larger impact because they require refrigeration during delivery.

Imported goods are also vulnerable to higher shipping costs, Gomez said. "Things like olive oil that we produce very little here and are coming from mostly from Europe are going to be up."

Grocery chain Albertsons on Thursday lowered its 2026 fiscal outlook, citing pressure on its core grocery business and a pullback in consumer spending.

Every product that moves will have higher costs baked into the price

Higher fuel costs for ships, trucks and air carriers can trickle down to consumers and businesses that depend on shipping. UPS, FedEx and other shipping services introduced fuel surcharges and other fees as fuel prices increased.

According to an AFS Logistics and TD Cowen Freight Index released July 14, truckload pricing is at a four-year high because of rising fuel costs and capacity constraints.

Andy Dyer, CEO of AFS Logistics, said diesel prices in the second quarter were about 51% higher than

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 59 of 73

in January and February, while jet fuel prices rose 90% from a year earlier.

"Beyond the direct impact of higher freight bills paid by shippers, these price movements also have second-order effects that squeeze rates higher," he said. "Smaller truckload carriers working on tight margins may park trucks and wait for fuel prices to revert to more palatable levels before returning to operation."

Retailers are noticing consumers pulling back

Rural lifestyle retailer Tractor Supply Co. reduced its annual sales outlook on Thursday, citing in part higher fuel prices during its spring selling season that weighed on customer spending.

"Our customers often drive longer distances to shop frequently in pickup trucks, many of which are diesel-powered, making them especially sensitive to higher fuel costs," CEO Hal Lawton told analysts.

Lawton said customers are still investing in their pets, animals, farms and properties, but shopping has become "more deliberate." Customers are consolidating trips, prioritizing needs-based purchases and taking a more measured approach to discretionary spending.

Back-to-school shoppers may face higher prices

The Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America trade group warned in a report Wednesday that increasing freight and material costs, along with rising tariffs costs, were creating big challenges for the footwear industry as families prepare for back-to-school shopping and companies plan for the remainder of the year.

Matt Priest, CEO and president of the trade group, said some of its members have cited 25% price increases for petroleum-based materials used in footwear manufacturing due to the Middle East conflict. Those costs could eventually translate into roughly a 5% increase in the cost of finished footwear products sold to consumers, Priest said in the report.

Footwear companies have been front-loading inventory and accelerating imports before President Donald Trump imposes new tariffs on foreign products, putting additional pressure on shipping rates, he said.

"Container rates are spiking right now," Priest said.

Higher jet fuel costs lead to costlier flights

Since the war began, airlines have responded to the jump in fuel costs by raising fares and add-on fees, and trimming flights or routes that are no longer profitable at higher fuel prices. Those moves can help protect the airlines' margins, but also leave travelers facing higher prices and fewer options, particularly in smaller or less competitive markets.

In the latest sign that the conflict is driving up costs for the travel industry, American Airlines on Thursday reported a sharp decline in second-quarter net income despite record revenue and strong spring travel demand.

American said higher fares helped offset nearly half of its higher fuel bill but not enough to prevent it from lowering its full-year outlook.

Despite higher prices, jet fuel demand in the last four weeks increased 9% compared to the same time last year, according to EIA.

How protests over a popular minister's firing sparked Ukraine's sudden military reset

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — In the span of a single week, the dismissal of a Ukrainian defense minister set in motion a transformation of the country's armed forces that replaced the old guard with a new generation of leadership.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's decision to fire his popular defense minister, Mykhailo Fedorov, triggered days of public protest that quickly shifted toward the country's commander-in-chief and highlighted the growing rift over the future of Ukraine's military.

Demonstrators denounced the commander, Oleksandr Syrskyi, and overwhelmingly rallied behind the departed defense minister, who has emerged as one of the country's most influential wartime reformers

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 60 of 73

with support from Ukrainians hungry for change. Protesters demanded his reinstatement. Fedorov's dismissal followed months of increasingly bitter disagreements between the two men.

For Zelenskyy, it was the second time in a year that a wartime decision triggered a public backlash, after he moved in mid-2025 to curb the powers of anti-corruption agencies. As he did then, the president appeared to move quickly to contain the political fallout. He dismissed Syrskyi and replaced him with Mykhailo Drapatyi, a disciplined battlefield commander whose reputation was forged in the years following Russia's first invasion in 2014.

Drapatyi's appointment marked a sharp generational and philosophical break from Syrskyi, who was shaped by Soviet military tradition. But public support continues to coalesce around Fedorov. The protests have further elevated his political standing.

New appointment eases concerns about military morale

Much of the public's anger was directed at Syrskyi, who became a symbol of deeper frustrations that had accumulated within the military since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Drapatyi's appointment has helped ease some of those concerns. Widely respected by troops and fellow officers, he represents a younger generation of commanders whose credibility was earned on the battlefield rather than inherited through the Soviet military system.

"He enjoys a high level of trust within the military. I think this appointment could boost what is often called morale, that is, strengthen the fighting spirit," said Oleksandr Musiienko, a military analyst in Kyiv.

The divide between Fedorov and Syrskyi was described by one Western defense official as between "different planets." The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief journalists.

Fedorov championed a data-driven, technology-led approach to warfare that clashed with Syrskyi's more traditional ground-forces doctrine. Drapatyi could be a bridge between the two camps, analysts said. Low-profile but highly respected, he has earned the confidence of front-line commanders while embracing many of the reforms championed in Kyiv.

"He has shown an ability to adapt to the realities of modern warfare, to changing battlefield conditions and to shifting and reallocating resources," Musiienko said.

For many Ukrainians, Syrskyi came to embody the rigid command structures and Soviet-era thinking that Fedorov's ambitious reforms sought to overhaul. When Fedorov publicly identified Syrskyi as the chief obstacle to those reforms, it brought to light those broader public grievances.

They include the military's entrenched bureaucracy and Syrskyi's command style, criticized as overly centralized and prone to micromanagement, alongside constant mobilization challenges.

Syrskyi also came under intense criticism for his association with the 425th Separate Assault Regiment, known as Skelia, which for many Ukrainians became emblematic of the tactics that expended soldiers' lives for marginal territorial gains.

In addition, the regiment was the focus of a major public scandal after an investigation by the Ukrainian publication Babel reported allegations of systemic abuse, torture in training camps and dozens of non-combat deaths. The allegations triggered an investigation, resulted in the suspension of the regiment's commander and intensified scrutiny of the military's command culture.

Apparent reversal is the second for Zelenskyy since last year

To some lawmakers and analysts, the episode demonstrated that democracy and accountability are alive in Ukraine despite martial law and the suspension of elections. Zelenskyy, they argued, showed he is still responsive to public demand.

Other lawmakers, however, cautioned that the episode could set a troubling precedent by allowing public sentiment, rather than institutional decision-making, to shape appointments to the military's highest ranks.

Tetiana Shevchuk, a board member of Ukraine's Anti-Corruption Action Center, said protest is one of the few ways the public can make their voice heard in the absence of elections.

"Frustrations built up to the point where people felt the only way to be heard was to take to the streets. That's not a healthy precedent, but it should also be a signal to the government to address problems

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 61 of 73

before they reach that stage," Shevchuk said.

Ukrainian social media quickly filled with memes mocking the president's apparent search for a new army chief, jokes that underscored the political cost of the episode for Zelenskyy.

Some memes depicted Zelenskyy interviewing absurd candidates, including Jon Snow from the "Game of Thrones" television series, as well as an alien and a dolphin.

Zelenskyy recently weathered a politically damaging corruption investigation involving several of his closest associates, including his former chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, who was dismissed amid mounting public pressure.

Support for Fedorov reflects public's desire for reform

The protests were not simply an expression of support for Fedorov, Shevchuk said. They reflected public backing for the reforms he aspired to create.

"Fedorov was pushing the idea that Ukraine had to preserve every soldier's life and become more efficient than Russia," Shevchuk said. "Over the past six months, people finally felt Ukraine was gaining an advantage. For the first time in a long time, there was hope that this war was winnable — that we weren't just taking loans while slowly losing territory."

Then Zelenskyy dismissed him.

The political drama is not over. Fedorov announced Thursday that he had rejected Zelenskyy's efforts to persuade him to rejoin the government in a different role, saying would not accept any position other than defense minister.

Leading the Defense Ministry, he said in a statement, was one of only three jobs that "actually shape the course of the war," along with the presidency and chief of the armed forces.

Zelenskyy said he had offered Fedorov the position of deputy prime minister for military innovation.

Where he goes next could shape the next phase of the saga.

The episode has also elevated Fedorov's political profile. He was once known primarily as the architect of Ukraine's digital transformation and subordinate to Zelenskyy. Now he has a broad base of public support.

That inevitably raises questions about his long-term political future.

In just six months as defense minister, Fedorov pursued an ambitious agenda aimed at accelerating Ukraine's military modernization.

He redirected funds originally earmarked for personnel costs toward long-range strike capabilities, fiber-optic drones, reconnaissance systems and other advanced technologies. He also highlighted expanded drone acquisition, new contracts related to Patriot air-defense systems, successful ballistic missile tests and a sweeping overhaul of military procurement.

Fedorov also proposed overhauling military service contracts to make front-line service more sustainable, including higher pay, expanded leave and greater flexibility for infantry soldiers. The changes resonated with troops.

House again passes a resolution seeking to halt military action in Iran as the conflict escalates

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House on Thursday narrowly passed a resolution to halt U.S. military action in Iran, sending a warning to President Donald Trump for the second time as the war has escalated and the future of the conflict is increasingly uncertain.

The 214-208 vote requiring congressional approval for the war came just before the Senate narrowly rejected a similar resolution, 47-49. Though the votes forced by Democrats are largely symbolic, they are meant as a signal to the Republican president that his support on Capitol Hill is chipping away as the war drags on and lawmakers in both parties have questioned his administration's endgame.

The war has had "no clear mission, no strategy, no end goal," said Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal, a Democrat who led the resolution on the House floor.

The House resolution passed after a handful of Republicans voted with Democrats to end the war. But

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 62 of 73

the vast majority of Republicans in both chambers voted to back the war and cede congressional war powers to Trump.

Joint U.S. and Israeli airstrikes launched the war in late February. A tenuous ceasefire deal was reached in April, but Trump declared the ceasefire was "over" earlier this month.

Trump has insisted that continued U.S. attacks against Iran do not mean a return to war or long-term action. After the first House vote to halt the war in early June, he posted on social media that it was "unpatriotic" and "meaningless."

A statement of administration policy issued by the White House on Thursday noted that the resolutions don't have the force of law and encouraged lawmakers to vote against them.

"The President has the Constitutional authority to defend the United States and our citizens from the danger posed by the Iranian regime," the policy statement said. "This requires the ability to act decisively to ensure it never obtains a nuclear weapon."

Continued American airstrikes are occurring even as diplomatic efforts show little public sign of progress and officials on both sides have dug in on the dispute over the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global energy that remains largely closed. The unpopular war threatens further worldwide economic disruption and is sending fuel prices up ahead of midterm U.S. elections this fall.

"We are in this new escalatory phase where Americans have been killed, and Americans are experiencing the rising costs — I think it's important that people be held accountable," said Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Democrat who led the Senate effort on Thursday. "And this is a very unpopular war."

Most Republicans vote to cede congressional powers

As the House debated the resolution Wednesday evening, Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Brian Mast, R-Fla., read out names of 18 service members killed since the war began.

"To belittle this mission is to belittle and demean the very service these members gave their life for," Mast said. "Their sacrifice was not meaningless. This operation is bringing reckoning for the hundreds of times Iran has attacked and killed people of the United States of America."

The top Democrat on the panel, New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, said that presidents are supposed to make the case to Congress.

The service members who died made the ultimate sacrifice for "an illegal unauthorized war that the American people don't want," Meeks said.

Democrats said they would continue to force Republicans to vote on the issue.

"If Donald Trump won't listen to the people and end this war then Congress must," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Trump is watching Iran votes closely

Republicans on both sides of the Capitol know that voting against the war can have a political cost, even as many of them have privately questioned the Trump administration's handling of the conflict.

In his post after the June House vote, Trump called the four Republicans who voted with Democrats "GRANDSTANDERS!" and said they should be "ashamed of themselves."

"They would rather have our Country fail than give me another, of many, victories," he said.

When the Senate passed a war powers resolution on Iran for the first time in June, Trump called the four Republicans who voted for it "losers" and then reprimanded them at a Senate GOP luncheon that he attended the next day.

Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of the Republicans who had voted with Democrats, said afterward that he had clashed with Trump over the issue. He said he told Trump directly that he needed to give more details to the public about the conflict.

"This was supposed to last four weeks. It's lasted four months," said Cassidy, who had just lost reelection in a primary after Trump endorsed one of his opponents. "Our original objectives have not been achieved."

Trump argued back, Cassidy later told reporters, and he told the president that he wouldn't change his vote until he got a briefing. The White House later relented, giving Cassidy a one-on-one meeting, and the Louisiana Republican changed his vote in a late-night do-over vote before the Senate left for a two-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 63 of 73

week recess.

Cassidy voted against the resolution again on Thursday.

Polling finds Americans disapprove of the war

Most Americans disapprove of the way Trump is handling the situation with Iran, according to recent polling. A Washington Post/Ipsos poll conducted in July found that few Americans think the war in Iran has been worth fighting, and most aren't confident that the U.S. military action in Iran and negotiations to end the war will prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Only about two-thirds of Republicans approve of Trump's handling of the situation in Iran, according to the poll. Most Republicans, about 6 in 10, think the war has been worth fighting and are confident that the military action and ensuing negotiations will prevent Iran from development nuclear weapons, but a sizable share — about one-third — are unconvinced.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said that if Congress can't force Trump to seek congressional authorization then lawmakers should block war funding. The House on Wednesday adopted a Republican-only \$95 billion budget proposal, including money for the Iran war, but its future is uncertain in the Senate.

"He wants to break the law, fine, let him break the law, but we control the appropriations process, and that's what we need to use," Kaine said.

A member of Vance's Secret Service detail is being investigated over a suspected news leak

WASHINGTON (AP) — A member of Vice President JD Vance's security detail is being investigated over allegations tied to a suspected news leak, the U.S. Secret Service said Thursday.

Anthony Guglielmi, a Secret Service spokesperson, said the security-team member faces an internal investigation and potential criminal inquiry over allegations involving compromised "operational and information security."

"While we will not comment on the specifics of this matter, one principle is unequivocal: any conduct that potentially threatens the safety of a protectee will not be tolerated," Guglielmi said in a statement.

The agency did not identify the person under investigation.

The Secret Service said the investigation is tied to a report from MS NOW last week saying that some Secret Service agents had privately expressed frustration over last-minute travel requests from Vance and his family.

Vance's office referred questions to the Secret Service.

Vance and his wife, Usha, live in the vice president's residence at the U.S. Naval Observatory along with their young children.

On Sunday, the couple welcomed their fourth child, Alec Neel Vance, the first baby born to a sitting vice president in more than 150 years. He's joined by older siblings Ewan, 9; Vivek, 6; and Mirabel, 4.

Ukraine hits Russia's largest online marketplace, hurting small businesses and bringing the war home

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

The Ukrainian attacks on the sprawling Russian warehouses produced stark images, with massive pillars of black smoke rising above fires that raged at facilities for Wildberries, the country's biggest online retailer and its equivalent of Amazon.

Kyiv's drones first hit the sites over the weekend in Elektrostal, just east of Moscow, and in the Tambov region, killing eight people and injuring scores more. Two more Wildberries warehouses — in the southern Krasnodar and Stavropol regions — were attacked and set ablaze early Wednesday. One person was killed, and 14 others were hurt.

The strikes are a part of Kyiv's aerial campaign inside Russia, aiming to undermine its wartime economy and make its citizens feel the consequences of the Kremlin's all-out invasion of Ukraine.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 64 of 73

A look at Wildberries and how it became a wartime target:

A retailer that has grown since 2004

Wildberries was launched in 2004 by Tatyana Kim, a teacher and a young mother at the time, focusing at first on selling clothes.

Since then, the platform with its distinct purple logo has become an industry leader and household name, allowing big and small businesses alike to sell their goods to customers across the country by storing, shipping and delivering their inventory. In April, Forbes Russia estimated Kim's fortune at \$8.1 billion.

The marketplace features all sorts of goods -- clothes, books, cosmetics, toys, appliances, household items, sports gear and much more. There's an "E-Pharmacy" page and a travel section where users can book plane tickets or hotels.

In 2021, Kim acquired a small bank and turned it into what now is Wildberries Bank, but that institution has since come under sanctions by the U.K. and the European Union.

Last year, Kim said the company had more than 200 facilities totaling over 5.2 million square meters (55 million square feet), with plans to expand in 2026, including planned warehouses in Belarus and Kazakhstan, where Wildberries already operates.

Some 500,000 to 800,000 sellers are involved with Wildberries, estimated Sergei Semko, leading analyst with Data Insight, a Moscow-based company that analyzes online retail in Russia.

Wildberries currently accounts for 52% of all online orders in Russia, Semko told The Associated Press.

Shoppers interviewed Thursday by AP in Moscow praised the convenience of Wildberries. One said she would continue to use it, even if it will cost more because of the attacks.

"Well, if they raise the prices, I don't mind. It still saves me time, and time is even more valuable," said Irina Potapova.

Kyiv says the stricken facilities supplied Russia's military

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy did not name Wildberries directly, he has said the facilities his country attacked were involved in supplying gear and various technical components to the Russian military.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that "it is not the case" and accused Kyiv of continuing to "strike civilian targets."

An AP search of the Wildberries website showed goods that could be used for both civilian and military purposes, such as body armor, helmets, radios and other electronics. Some of those were even marked as "tested in the SVO" or "SVO fighters' choice" -- a Russian acronym for "special military operation," the term used by the Kremlin for the war in Ukraine.

Wildberries did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Russia regularly attacks Ukrainian logistics and retail facilities, including several that were hit last week. The attacks are a blow to Russia's small businesses

The attacks have dealt a massive blow to many small businesses in Russia, Semko said.

Online retailers like Wildberries and its competitors Ozon and Yandex Market have enabled local craftsmen and entrepreneurs to sell their goods across Russia's vast territory, he said.

Since Saturday, people took to social media to say that inventory for their businesses that was being stored by Wildberries in the attacked facilities had been destroyed, tearfully recounting their losses.

The extent of the damage at the four warehouses is hard to gauge.

According to Wildberries' online statements, it took three days to put out the fire at the facility in Elektrostal, a key distribution hub for Moscow, but the site in Kotovsk, in the Tambov region, resumed operations Thursday. Both Kim and the company have not elaborated on how much was damaged.

Peskov said Tuesday that "the situation is difficult due to the losses suffered by both the company itself and representatives of small and medium-sized businesses."

In order to support the sellers, Wildberries offered discounts on storage fees, free transfer of goods to other facilities, discounted loans at the Wildberries Bank and other measures.

Many wondered whether they would be compensated for their losses. Earlier this month, the company changed its seller policy and is now exempt from liability for stock damaged because of a "force majeure,"

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 65 of 73

which includes drone attacks.

Late Wednesday, Kim said the company began payments to sellers whose inventory was damaged at the Elektrostal site. "First and foremost, we want to support the smallest and most vulnerable entrepreneurs — there are more than 88,000 of them. The funds will appear on sellers' balances within 24 hours," she said.

Semko cautioned that there is not enough data to make an assessment but he estimated the four stricken facilities accounted for about 12% of Wildberries' total warehouse space. He said that the losses of the goods could be as high as about \$3 billion.

That loss comes on top of increased taxes, a fuel crisis and additional regulatory hurdles faced by many small Russian businesses this year, he said.

"It is almost a perfect storm," Semko added.

The strikes also undermine Russian morale

Russia's online retail sector has grown rapidly since 2022, said Chris Weafer, CEO of Macro-Advisory Ltd. Consultancy. It accounts for about 20% of all retail sales in Russia, and "that comes from about much less than half of that five years ago," he told AP.

After multiple Western brands withdrew their business from Russia over its war in Ukraine, Wildberries and Ozon managed to source products no longer available in shopping malls via parallel imports from Asia, the United Arab Emirates or Turkey, leading to the rapid growth in online business, Weafer said.

He estimated Russia's e-commerce sector to be worth around \$150 billion, and online retail around \$80 billion-\$90 billion of that.

The warehouse attacks added to the pain of small businesses, which in recent years have been "struggling very badly," Weafer said, while probably causing only "relatively slight" damage to the industry and the economy in general, which he described as effectively stagnant, but stable.

Rather, he said, it's about "undermining public morale, and getting people to talk much more" about the war and question the Kremlin's actions.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, people largely appeared complacent about the fighting.

"It was something that was happening a long way off," Weafer said. But that has changed this year, with regular strikes on oil refineries in parts of Russia leading to the massive fires, and now Wildberries, he added.

"There is now much more awareness, but there's also much more discussion, and more people are questioning what's going on and why is it happening and the conflict lasting so long," he said. "It brings it home."

What experts are saying as Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda kills more than 1,000 people

By MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — The fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in history has killed more than 1,000 people in eastern Congo as health officials race to contain a virus with no approved vaccine or treatment.

An update from Congo's public health institute on Wednesday said there have been 2,536 confirmed Ebola cases and 1,033 deaths, with at least 738 patients in isolation or hospitalized.

The outbreak declared on May 15 is unlike most previous instances of Ebola spreading through communities because the Bundibugyo virus responsible has no approved vaccines or treatments.

It is mostly concentrated in remote Ituri province, which accounts for nearly 90% of cases, but there have been others confirmed in five provinces including one of Congo's largest cities, Kisangani, and in neighboring Uganda.

Here is what to know about the outbreak:

Outbreak is spreading despite signs of slowing

While Congolese officials say the sharp rise in cases appears to be slowing, they caution the outbreak has not yet peaked. The latest report by the country's public health institute says transmission remains sustained, with recent fluctuations in cases likely influenced by reporting delays and ongoing data con-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 66 of 73

solidation.

Contact tracing continues to lag, with only around 77% of known contacts monitored nationwide, well below the 95% target health officials say is needed to interrupt transmission.

Responders are struggling to understand how far the Ebola outbreak has spread and how much worse it might become.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers last month used computer modeling and found that in a worst-case scenario, the current Ebola outbreak could approach the worst in history.

The West Africa epidemic in 2014-2016 caused more than 11,000 deaths and took about eight months from the first case to reach 1,000 deaths.

The new outbreak's origin is still a medical mystery. The vast majority of cases are emerging from unknown chains of transmission, the World Health Organization said.

Risk of the outbreak spreading globally remains low

The WHO continues to assess the risk from the outbreak as "very high" inside Congo and "high" in Uganda and neighboring countries, citing cross-border spread, frequent population movement and ongoing transmission in eastern Congo.

The agency says the global risk of spread is low, noting Ebola spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person rather than through the air, making it much harder to spread than respiratory viruses.

While WHO says additional imported cases are likely as the outbreak grows, those cases have so far been rapidly detected and contained without leading to sustained transmission outside the affected region.

The CDC echoed that assessment in its latest situation report, saying Ebola doesn't spread like respiratory viruses such as flu or COVID-19.

"You cannot get Ebola from being near someone," the agency said.

The CDC also notes that people infected with Ebola are not contagious until they develop symptoms, making case identification and contact tracing easier than with diseases that spread before symptoms appear.

The outbreak has spread little beyond Congo

The vast majority of Ebola cases are concentrated in Congo.

In neighboring Uganda, 20 cases have been confirmed, including two deaths. All cases were linked to imported infections from Congo and are concentrated in the capital Kampala. No new Ebola cases have been reported since June 21 and the WHO has discharged its final patient, beginning the 42-day countdown used to declare the end of an outbreak.

A positive case of Ebola was identified in France in a doctor traveling from Congo in June. He has since fully recovered and was discharged from the hospital earlier this month.

The United States currently bars most recent travelers from Congo from entering the country and requires U.S. citizens to spend 21 days outside Congo before returning, while travelers from neighboring Uganda and South Sudan who are allowed to enter are routed through designated airports for Ebola screening.

U.S. plans to build an Ebola quarantine facility in Kenya for Americans evacuated from Congo have been met with legal challenges and a series of protests in Kenya, including some that have turned violent.

Community resistance and lack of testing slow response

Lack of trust and resistance from locals remain one of the biggest obstacles to containing the outbreak, according to authorities and health workers.

Rumors about Ebola treatment centers, fears of isolation and resistance to safe burials have led some people to avoid testing or seek care only after becoming critically ill.

The response also has been hampered by conflict. Fighting involving the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels, attacks by the Islamic State-linked Allied Democratic Forces and mass displacement have complicated surveillance, contact tracing and access to affected communities.

At least 16 people were killed in an attack Wednesday by suspected ADF rebels in a village in Ituri province, local authorities said Thursday.

Unlike previous Ebola outbreaks, the Bundibugyo virus driving the epidemic has no approved vaccine or treatment. Although testing capacity has expanded since the outbreak began, responders say the virus

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 67 of 73

continues to spread faster than they can contain it.

"There's never been an Ebola outbreak that started with so many cases because it was so late to be identified," said Trish Newport, emergency program manager for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), who has been working in Congo.

Earlier this month, researchers began the first clinical trial of potential treatments for the Bundibugyo virus, enrolling patients at an Ebola treatment center in Ituri province. The WHO said it could take months and as many as 1,000 participants to determine whether either of the two experimental treatments is effective.

Mideast oil producers step up plans to bypass the Strait of Hormuz

By DAVID McHUGH Associated Press

Before the war in Iran, roughly 15 million barrels of Persian Gulf oil were shipped each day through the Strait of Hormuz. Within a few years, much of that oil could bypass the strait.

As Iran's chokehold over the strait drags on and oil prices surge, countries across the Gulf are planning to spend billions of dollars to build pipelines enabling them to redirect more supplies to ports on the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman and the Mediterranean.

At least seven major pipeline projects are under construction, in the planning stage or being discussed as possibilities, according to government officials, oil companies and analysts. The war has been a wake-up call for Gulf oil producers, who are determined to become less dependent on a transit point that hugs Iran's coast.

But alternatives to Hormuz are also vulnerable to disruption. Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels said early Thursday they had attacked two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, a key alternative route to the strait for Saudi oil exports.

Some alternative routes will take the oil on longer and more expensive paths to market. Regardless, producers have realized that relying so heavily on the Strait of Hormuz "is no longer a prudent long-term strategy," said Victoria Grabenwöger, senior research analyst at data firm Kpler.

The Red Sea and Gulf of Oman have become vital alternatives to Hormuz

The effective shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz would have been an even greater shock to the world economy were it not for a pipeline Saudi Arabia built in the 1980s amid fears that Tehran would disrupt shipping through the strait during the Iran-Iraq war.

The Saudis' East-West pipeline carries oil across the desert nation from a processing facility in Abqaiq to the city of Yanbu on the Red Sea coast. Once there, it is loaded onto tankers that head either south to the Arabian Sea or north to the Suez Canal.

The United Arab Emirates has been sending more oil to the port of Fujairah, which abuts the Gulf of Oman, about 145 kilometers (90 miles) south of Hormuz.

Combined, the two pipelines had spare capacity of about 3.5 million to 5.5 million barrels per day before the war began, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The two pipelines are now running near full capacity.

More oil could begin flowing through a UAE port by next year

The state-owned oil company of Abu Dhabi, one of the UAE's seven emirates, is accelerating construction of a \$3 billion, 300-kilometer (200-mile) pipeline to Fujairah. That pipeline, which will run parallel to an existing one, aims to increase oil supplied to Fujairah by more than 1.2 million barrels a day.

The project, which started before the war, is now reportedly about halfway completed, according to Kpler. The pipeline is intended to be completed by early 2027, but Kpler says mid-2027 is more likely given the need to expand the port at Fujairah.

The ambitious timeline "has only become feasible against the backdrop of the Strait of Hormuz blockade," Kpler's Grabenwöger said.

Plans to pipe more oil to Turkey and Syria will take longer

In Iraq, officials are ramping up plans to develop alternative export routes for southern oil fields around Basra. Iraq is so dependent on the Strait of Hormuz that it has had to scale back production.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 68 of 73

The Iraqi government, which gets some 90% of its revenues from oil sales, has been pursuing pipeline projects with U.S. companies. One would take supplies from an oil terminal in Basra — through which more than 3 million barrels were exported daily before the war — to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey, along the Mediterranean Sea.

That pipeline would also have a branch extending to the Mediterranean port of Baniyas in Syria. Some 2 million barrels a day of oil could ultimately flow through the pipeline to Baniyas, which the U.S. State Department has called “a critical energy corridor.”

Iraqi officials have also held discussions with Jordan on advancing long-discussed plans for a pipeline that would carry oil from Basra to Aqaba. From there it would be exported via the Red Sea or the Suez Canal to Asia and beyond.

The new pipelines will add time and costs — and are also vulnerable to attacks

Taken together, the new projects to bypass Hormuz could carry an added 3.8 million barrels of oil a day by the end of next year, and 7.3 million barrels per day by the end of 2028, according to analysts at the investment bank Goldman Sachs. The projects would mean some 60% of the Gulf’s total prewar exports of 23 million barrels a day could bypass Hormuz if needed, the analysts said.

Pipelines from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea send oil in the wrong direction to help Asian countries that relied on exports through Hormuz, requiring a much longer trip around the southern tip of Africa.

Any additional supplies piped from Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea will also be vulnerable to attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen, as Thursday’s attacks show; the rebels have successfully disrupted shipping before at the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

That oil could also be sent to the Suez Canal instead to reach the Mediterranean. But the canal cannot accommodate the industry’s largest tankers, which hold up to 2 million barrels per vessel and are often the most cost-efficient way to transport oil long distances.

And pipelines themselves are not immune to attack. The Saudi East-West pipeline was shut down by a Houthi drone strike in May 2019.

Meanwhile oil pipelines don’t help with the disruption to supplies of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, carried by ship. About one-fifth of the world’s LNG — much of it from Qatar and headed for Asian customers — transited the strait before the war.

Democrats seize on AI data center backlash that’s dividing rural Republicans in places like Texas

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

AMARILLO, Texas (AP) — When Gina Hinojosa, the Democratic nominee for Texas governor, began her campaign last year, candidates weren’t talking about — or hearing about — data centers that power artificial intelligence.

But with barely three months until November’s contest, the perceived threat to rural life, ranchland and dwindling water supplies could become a defining issue for her long-shot challenge to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, dividing conservative rural areas that have traditionally served as a counterweight to Democrats’ urban strongholds.

The backlash to energy-guzzling server warehouses is also shaping other statewide campaigns from Arizona to Ohio to New York, and even giving Democrats a glimmer of hope in Texas, where Republicans have dominated for three decades.

“There is this little issue that I recently started hearing about that I wanted to tell you about, in case you don’t know,” Hinojosa quipped to a Democratic Party-organized crowd of about 160 seated on fold-out chairs at an Amarillo social club in Texas’ panhandle. “It’s this issue of data centers.”

The crowd booed, and she went on: “They are owned by the richest men in the world. We’re all footing the bill. There are no rules. It is the wild west of data centers.”

The fast growth of massive data centers has already upended races for local offices across the country,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 69 of 73

often uniting conservatives and liberals in revolting against projects in their midst.

People don't like the secrecy surrounding the projects or the prospect of air, noise, water and light pollution. They fear electric bills going up, wells going dry and losing open space, farmland or forest.

Now the ripple effects have spread to top-of-the-ticket races, where incumbents and challengers are trying to show that they hear an angry electorate.

In Ohio, Democratic nominee Sherrod Brown aired a television advertisement attacking Republican U.S. Sen. John Husted as the "face of data centers in Ohio" as people gather signatures for a statewide referendum to outright ban their construction.

In Wisconsin, a Democratic candidate for governor, Francesca Hong, is pledging to "tax the rich, fund our schools and stop AI data centers" as she campaigns for her party's nomination in a crowded primary.

In Pennsylvania, Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro is facing heat from some voters who feel like he's been too welcoming to tech behemoths. Sam Burleigh, a Democrat whose rural community is fighting off data center projects, accused Shapiro of "allowing these data centers to come in and take over acres and acres of prime farmland."

Texas is fertile ground for data centers

Any political unrest may be felt most acutely in Texas.

The state is poised to overtake northern Virginia as the largest global data center market by 2030, according to a report by commercial real estate giant JLL. It has lots of land, lots of energy and a friendly regulatory environment under Republican leadership.

In rural west Texas and its panhandle, gargantuan data centers are under construction, including one near Amarillo touted as the world's largest. Some come with designs for natural gas-fired turbines to power them.

Rumors are flying about others popping up — Google, which is building four data centers in northwest Texas, sponsored moderated conversations with officials and business elite in Lubbock and Amarillo in recent weeks — and it is sowing an outcry across small cities, tiny towns and sprawling ranches where people vote overwhelmingly Republican.

Google says its investments are advancing American innovation, fortifying cybersecurity and boosting energy capacity, while President Donald Trump has made data centers a top priority to help the U.S. compete against China for AI superiority.

But tech giants and developers can be secretive about their plans, making it impossible to know what will be built or what sort of pollution they'll create, critics say. Some worry that data centers will destroy rural Texas' low cost of living and sully sunsets and sweeping views that stretch toward the horizon.

Others say construction and an influx of workers are already causing havoc for ranchers and towns, driving up rents, snapping up farmland, illuminating the night sky, clogging roads and turning parts of rural Texas into industrial zones.

Opposition crosses a partisan divide

Democrats are prominent among the data center critics, but so are Republicans, including Texas' sitting agriculture commissioner, Sid Miller. They say there are many more Republicans who are quieter because they fear publicly opposing their governor and party.

"They're upset with Greg Abbott," said Suzanne Bellsnyder, a former Republican activist from Spearman who writes a syndicated column that advocates for rural Texas. "Whether that translates into voting against him, I don't know."

Abbott has aggressively advocated for big projects in Texas and, in November, he helped make Google's announcement of a \$40 billion investment there, saying "Texas is the epicenter of AI development."

Compounding that, Texas counties don't have zoning authority — precisely the local land planning authority that communities around the country are increasingly using to fight off data centers.

Abbott seems to recognize that data centers are dividing his base. In recent weeks, he ordered regulators to take steps to ensure Texans weren't paying higher electricity bills because of data centers and promised to push a legislative agenda next year to impose regulations on data centers.

At an East Texas campaign stop, Abbott said that includes taking away the state's billion-dollar-plus-per-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 70 of 73

year tax break and preventing data centers from being built in "rural Texas neighborhoods."

Hinojosa and others derided Abbott's words about "rural Texas neighborhoods" as meaningless — "doublespeak that makes no sense to anyone," Hinojosa said — and lacking urgency or seriousness.

"Now we have this gold rush of data centers in our communities," Hinojosa said in an interview, adding that "people want a say, and I think that's fair."

As governor, she said she'd block a permit for a data center if it wasn't a good deal for Texans or residents hadn't gotten a say in the matter.

Abbott tries to soothe concerns

Abbott's campaign season turnabout on data centers doesn't seem to have soothed many.

Of great concern is the prospect that data centers will consume massive amounts of water and worsen drought conditions for ranchers and farmers in a state where water shortages already crippled the sugar cane industry.

"Oh, I guarantee you, it's on everybody's mind," said Giles Dalby, a cattle rancher and a Republican county commissioner in west Texas.

Dalby, who raises Angus and Brangus cattle on ranchland that's been in his family for 125 years, pointed to fast-growing cities where water authorities have had to go to greater lengths to procure water, including the "water wars" between San Antonio and ranchers several years ago.

Texas is increasingly steamrolling over landowner rights in the quest for public water, Dalby said, and that could mean that data centers get in line ahead of ranchers when shortages or rationing worsen.

Clayton Tucker, a rancher and the Democratic nominee for state agriculture commissioner, said his campaign events are consumed by talk of data centers. It doesn't matter whether he's meeting with Democrats or Republicans.

"This is the most cross-partisan issue I've ever seen in my life," Tucker said.

Meanwhile, protest groups are springing up, including one in Lubbock that is led by Republicans. The founders, Stephen Sanders and Hallie Bertrand, like some other Republican opponents of data centers, say it's possible or even certain they won't vote for Abbott, although they may not necessarily vote for Hinojosa.

There is still time for Abbott to push through major legislation before the election and "be a hero," Sanders said.

The big question is whether enough rural voters will turn against Abbott to give Hinojosa a shot. It's hard to tell, Bertrand said, especially when some know nothing about the issue.

"They'll just hit that button, Republican all the way down," Bertrand said. "But I think it's a step towards something that we have not seen in Texas in a long time, with people on the right switching to the left. Or scooting a little closer to the middle, maybe."

Death toll in India hydropower tunnel disaster rises to 25 as rescue effort ends

By WASBIR HUSSAIN Associated Press

GUWAHATI, India (AP) — Authorities recovered the bodies of the remaining 13 workers trapped inside a collapsed hydropower tunnel in India, taking the death toll to 25 as authorities ended the rescue operations on Thursday.

Multiple agencies had made sustained and coordinated rescue efforts in the four days since a gas explosion ripped through the tunnel. Following the recovery of all the missing employees, teams carried out a final inspection of the tunnel, the state government of Sikkim said in a statement.

The blast occurred Monday at the 500-megawatt Teesta Hydroelectric Project about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of the state capital Gangtok in the Himalayan state.

A buildup of methane gas triggered the explosion, trapping dozens of workers underground. Rescue efforts were hampered by the toxic gas inside, officials said.

The government said it formed a high-level committee to investigate the disaster and recommend safe-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 71 of 73

guards against to prevent such accidents in the future.

Construction accidents are not uncommon in India, where rapid infrastructure growth often collides with fragile geology, construction lapses, extreme weather and safety standards.

The Teesta River basin, where the hydropower project is being built, lies in a seismically active region marked by young, fragile rock formations riddled with fractures and underground pockets that can trap ancient gases. Seismic activity and unpredictable underground conditions make tunnel projects especially risky in the region, according to experts.

A February explosion in a coal mine in neighboring Meghalaya state killed 18 workers. A tunnel section collapsed in 2023 in northern Uttarakhand state, trapping 41 workers for 17 days before they were rescued.

Amish Shah wins Democratic congressional primary in Arizona, a blow to the party establishment

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Amish Shah won the Democratic primary Wednesday in a hotly contested congressional district in Arizona, delivering another defeat to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which backed a rival, as more voters reject the preferences of party leaders in Washington.

Shah, an emergency physician, will face Republican Jay Feely, a former NFL kicker who was endorsed by President Donald Trump in his primary, in the fall. Before becoming political opponents, Feely and Shah were part of the same team — the New York Jets. Shah was a doctor on the sidelines, while Feely was the kicker.

The DCCC backed Marlene Galán-Woods, a former Republican who switched parties at the beginning of Trump's first term.

The competition for the 1st Congressional District, an affluent area that includes northeast Phoenix, Scottsdale, Fountain Hills and Paradise Valley, is expected to help determine control of the U.S. House. Although Republicans hold a voter registration advantage, the district has shifted toward the center over the last decade.

The seat is open because Republican Rep. David Schweikert ran for governor, losing to Rep. Andy Biggs in the GOP primary on Tuesday.

The DCCC's decision to endorse Galán-Woods, a former television journalist in Phoenix, puzzled local Democrats because there was little ideological difference between her and Shah. Both are moderates, and the race was not a proxy fight in the party's deepening feud between progressives and centrists.

"Our victory in this primary was a grassroots victory where Arizona voters made their voices heard," Shah said Wednesday night in a statement that did not address the DCCC snub. "Now, it's my job to earn the support of every voter in this district."

Rep. Suzan DelBene, the DCCC Chair, issued a statement calling Feely an "extremist" and saying Shah "will always put his community first," but did not address the controversy surrounding the support for Galán-Woods.

The National Republican Congressional Committee quickly released a digital ad Wednesday attacking Shah, labeling him a socialist and tying him to progressives in Congress.

"I'm a political outsider committed to delivering results," Feely said in a statement.

The race was in some ways a replay of 2024, when Shah narrowly won in a crowded primary field that included Galán-Woods and lost in the general election. The DCCC did not endorse in the primary that year but backed Shah in the general.

The DCCC announced its support for Galán-Woods in May, when it added her to a list of candidates it was supporting in Republican-controlled districts. At the time, DelBene talked up Galán-Woods' experience in broadcast journalism but said nothing about Shah.

"I wasn't exactly my party's pick," Shah told supporters Tuesday night. "And I was willing to stand up to that establishment. And that's what the voters of this district want."

Still, he has said he would work with the DCCC if nominated. He will need support from the party and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 72 of 73

its donors to win what's likely to be a tough race in a district Trump carried narrowly in 2024. Former Democratic President Joe Biden won the district in 2020 even as Schweikert was reelected.

Antiestablishment fervor has spooked congressional leaders, who fear that swing voters will see some insurgent candidates as too extreme and squander Democrats' opportunity to take advantage of Trump's unpopularity.

Last month progressive Randy Villegas beat a DCCC-backed candidate for a top battleground district in California's Central Valley. And similarly in Maine, Matt Dunlap defeated a more moderate rival backed by the party.

DCCC support generally brings an influx of money and staffing, both from the party itself and from the donors and interest groups that take its cues. But establishment support has been a turnoff for some voters.

"The Democratic Party needs to grow up and wake up," said Maria Liong, a 24-year-old medical student who volunteered for Shah's campaign. "They need to realize that they want candidates who listen to their people."

In the GOP primary, Feely defeated Joseph Chaplik, a former state lawmaker popular with grassroots activists, for the party's nomination. He was in the NFL with seven teams over 14 seasons, including with the Arizona Cardinals from 2010 to 2013. He became an NFL broadcaster after retiring in 2014.

Feely and Shah overlapped on the Jets during the 2008 and 2009 seasons, when Shah worked home games as an airway management physician, according to his campaign. Every NFL game has an airway management doctor on the sideline to intubate and resuscitate a catastrophically injured player.

"It's an old relationship," Feely said of Shah on Tuesday night, before it was clear which Democrat he would face in November. "But whoever it is, I want to do this the right way. I want to run this the right way."

Today in History: July 24, Apollo 11 returns home from the moon

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 24, the 205th day of 2026. There are 160 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 24, 1969, the Apollo 11 astronauts — two of whom were the first humans to set foot on the moon — splashed down safely in the Pacific.

Also on this date:

In 1567, Mary, Queen of Scots, was forced to abdicate her throne to her 1-year-old son James.

In 1847, Mormon leader Brigham Young and his followers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in present-day Utah.

In 1866, Tennessee became the first state to be readmitted to the Union after the Civil War.

In 1915, the SS Eastland, a passenger ship carrying more than 2,500 people, rolled onto its side while docked at the Clark Street Bridge on the Chicago River. An estimated 844 people died in the disaster.

In 1959, during a visit to Moscow, Vice President Richard Nixon engaged in his famous "Kitchen Debate" with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that President Richard Nixon had to turn over subpoenaed White House tape recordings to the Watergate special prosecutor.

In 1975, an Apollo spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific, completing a mission which included the first docking with a Soyuz capsule from the Soviet Union.

In 2010, a stampede inside a tunnel crowded with techno music fans left 21 people dead and more than 500 injured at the famed Love Parade festival in Duisburg, Germany.

In 2013, a high-speed train crash outside Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain killed 79 people.

In 2025, an Antonov An-24 turboprop passenger plane operated by Angara Airlines crashed near Tynda in Russia's Far East, killing all 48 passengers and crew.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dan Hedaya is 86. Actor Chris Sarandon is 84. Actor Robert Hays is 79. Actor Michael Richards is 77. Actor Lynda Carter is 75. Movie director Gus Van Sant is 74. Country singer Pam

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 73 of 73

Tillis is 69. Basketball Hall of Famer Karl Malone is 63. Retired MLB All-Star Barry Bonds is 62. Actor Kadeem Hardison is 61. Actor-singer Kristin Chenoweth is 58. Actor Laura Leighton is 58. Actor-singer Jennifer Lopez is 57. Director Patty Jenkins ("Wonder Woman") is 55. Actor Eric Szmanda is 51. Actor Rose Byrne is 47. Country singer Jerrod Niemann is 47. Actor Elisabeth Moss is 44. Actor Anna Paquin is 44. Former NHL center Patrice Bergeron is 41. Actor Mara Wilson is 39. Actor Cailee Spaeny is 28. TV personality Bindi Irwin is 28. Actor Dylan Hoffman is 18.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, July 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 049 ~ 74 of 73