Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 1 of 80

1- Upcoming Events
2- We the People: Holding a President Accountable is Just too Difficult: The Executive Unbound
3- Dacotah Bank ad
4- Brown County Fair ad
5- Dairy Queen Ad
6- 14U State Pairings
7- Groton's season ends with loss to Scotland/Menno/Freeman/Canistota at State 14U Tournament
7- Storm rolls through Groton
8- Sunday Extras
26- Gov. Rhoden's Weekly Column
27- Sen. Thune's Weekly Column
28- Rev. Snyder's Column
30- South Dakota Average Gas Prices
31- Drought Monitor
32- SD SearchLight: State fund helps 911 centers consolidate, with more mergers on the way
33- SD SearchLight: Flood of poll watchers, observers, monitors to descend on midterm voters
36- SD SearchLight: Podcast: South Dakota's journey to a historic runoff election
40- Weather Pages
45- Daily Devotional
46- Subscription Form
47- Lottery Numbers
48- News from the Associated Press



Community Calendar

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 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.

State B Legion 14U at Vermillion

Monday, July 27

Senior Menu: Hot turkey sandwich, creamy noodles, peas and carrots, fruit.

Senior citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck at noon.

United Methodist Vacation Bible school, 5 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

Elementary Volleyball Camp, 8 a.m. to noon, GHS Gym and Arena

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

Junior Legion Regional Tournament at Sisseton: 5 p.m.: Groton vs. Big Stone City; 30 minutes after first game: Claremont vs. Sisseton.

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

© 2026 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 2 of 80

We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

Holding a President Accountable is Just too Difficult: The Executive Unbound

When Vice President JD Vance spoke in June at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, he said that "if Watergate happened tomorrow, it would be like, a 12-hour news story. The idea that it would have taken down a presidency is crazy." Vance added that the "deep state" that took down Nixon, tried to do the same to President Donald Trump. "There's a parallel," he said.

Vance is part of the campaign to rehabilitate Nixon's reputation, as a means of both sanitizing and diminishing the significance of Trump's assault on the Constitution and, more broadly, loosening restraints on executive power to render the presidency less accountable to Congress, the rule of law and the American people.

The issue of executive accountability, a preeminent worry among delegates to the Constitutional Convention, has, more than once, presented challenges to our constitutional system, but it became an acute crisis with the Watergate Affair. It was Sen. George Aikin (R-Vt.), who, in the throes of Watergate, captured the precise problem. He observed: "Many prominent Americans, who ought to know better, find the task of holding a President accountable as just too difficult. To ask the President now to resign and thus relieve Congress of its clear congressional duty amounts to a declaration of incompetence on the part of Congress."

Congress was more than a little reluctant to investigate Nixon, and his aides and advisors—their lies, lawlessness and cover-up of the break-in at the Watergate Hotel. The precipitating event that sparked congressional engagement was the Saturday Night Massacre on October 20, 1973, and millions of letters from ordinary citizens demanding the impeachment of President Nixon. The problem of congressional inertia in investigating Nixon represented a glaring weakness in our system in maintaining executive accountability, a profound problem that has reached an acute stage in the unwillingness of the Republicans in the Senate and House to hold President Trump accountable for his assault on the Constitution that exceeds Nixon's abuses of power.

The crisis of executive accountability has been exacerbated by the US Supreme Court's rulings that have expanded presidential power by vesting the presidency with sweeping authority to control independent agencies and, as readers know, granting the president immunity from criminal prosecution in all but a very few instances. This is systemic failure that will leave the Constitution in tatters.

At least Senate Republicans—led by Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) -- mustered the courage in late July of 1974, after the Court rendered its decision in United States v. Nixon, in which it ruled that Nixon was required to surrender the Watergate Tapes, which revealed that was, indeed, a crook, and engaged in the orchestration of the cover-up of Watergate-related crimes, to tell Nixon that he needed to resign because he would be impeached and removed from the presidency. But there appears to be no Republican Senator or member of the House willing to issue such demands to Trump. Nor is the Court any longer interested in restraining the presidency in the name of accountability but rather committed to a career in erasing the mechanisms of accountability in our constitutional system.

Nixon escaped accountability, just as Trump evades it still. By resigning the presidency, Nixon essentially thwarted the process of accountability, which required his impeachment, followed by a Senate trial that would have convicted him of committing impeachable offenses and removing him from office. Further, President Gerald Ford's pardon of Nixon on September 8, 1974, contributed to the miscarriage of justice, for it meant that Nixon's acts, including obstruction of justice and bribery, spared him a criminal trial.

The lesson from Watergate was that a president who committed gross violations of the Constitution, as well as criminal acts, could escape accountability and justice if actors vested with the power and responsibility of maintaining accountability find it "too difficult" to perform their duties. The purported remedies of Watergate, including the enactment of a law creating a Special Counsel, has lapsed, and the idea of vigorous congressional oversight and investigation seems to have all but disappeared. Meanwhile, presidential power under President Trump has been expanded at an alarming rate, as he now enjoys an unprecedented concentration of power. What Sen. Aiken said during the Watergate crisis is demonstrably clear today. At this juncture, those pursuing elective office must confront these systemic failures and suggest serious solutions to holding the presidency accountable.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.



Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 4 of 80



Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 5 of 80

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals

DQ

Treat your team. Help local kids.

BUY A BLIZZARD® MAKE A Miracle!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

THURSDAY JULY 30

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
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 6 of 80

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 12
Region 5B Champ

July 24th Game 1
11:00 AM

GROTON POST 39 8
Region 1B Champ

WINNER/COLOME POST 169 11
Region 7B Champ

July 24th Game 2
30 Min After G1

S/M/F/C POST 152 5
Region 4B Champ

ELK POINT POST 134 5
Region 3B Champ

July 24th Game 3
30 Min After G2

LENNOX POST 174 7
Region 6B Champ

MADISON POST 25 14
Region 2B Champ

July 24th Game 4
7:00 PM

VERMILLION POST 1 0
Host

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

Dell Rapids 5
Winner G1

July 25th Game 7
30 Min After G6

Winner/Colome 8
Winner G2

Lennox
Winner G3

July 25th Game 8
30 Min After G7

Madison
Winner G4

Groton 1
Loser G1

July 25th Game 5
11:00 AM

S/M/F/C 11
Loser G2

Elk Point 4
Loser G3

July 25th Game 6
30 Min After G5

Vermillion 11
Loser G4

Winner/Colome
Winner G7

July 26th Game 11
30 Min After Game 10

Champion

Madison
Winner G8

Dell Rapids
Loser G7

July 26th Game 10
30 Min After G9

3rd Place

Lennox
Loser G8

S/M/F/C
Winner G5

July 26th Game 9
10:00 AM

5th Place

Vermillion
Winner G6

Tournament MVP:
Big Stick Award:
Porter T. Talcott Sportsmnship Award:

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 7 of 80

Groton's season ends with loss to Scotland/Menno/Freeman/Canistota at State 14U Tournament

VERMILLION — Groton Post 39 saw its season come to an end Saturday after falling 11-1 to Scotland/Menno/Freeman/Canistota (SMFC) Post 152 79ers in an elimination game at the South Dakota Class B 14U American Legion State Baseball Tournament.

SMFC took control early, scoring five runs in the opening inning. Hayes S. and Dylan D. each delivered RBI singles before Destry H. doubled home two more runs. Parker S. capped the inning with another run-scoring single to give the 79ers a 5-0 advantage.

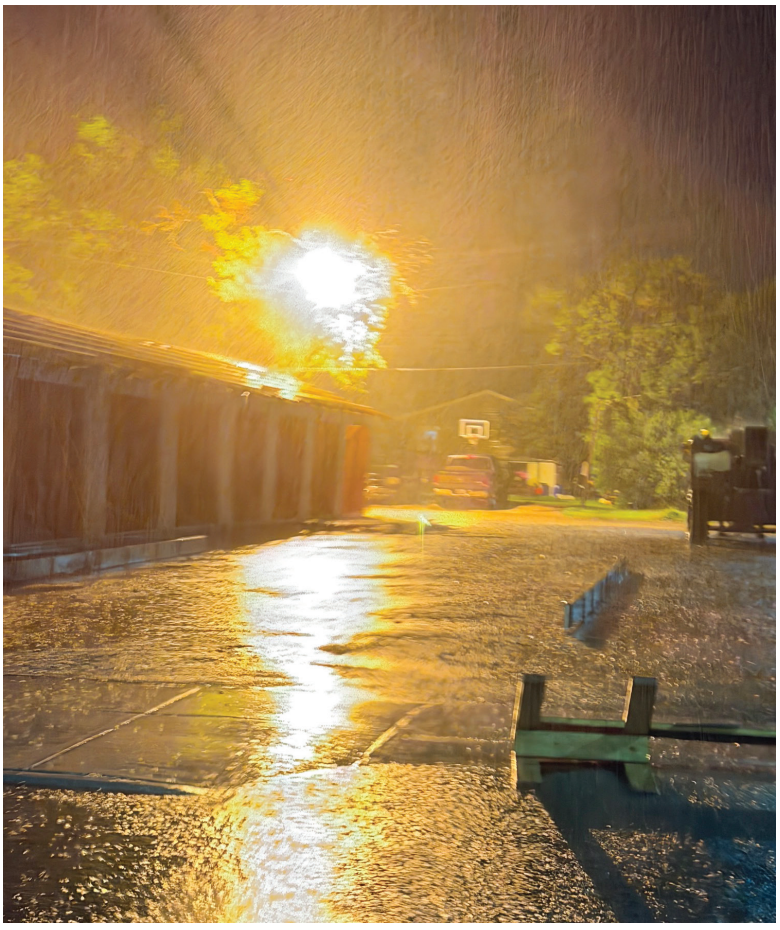
The 79ers added four more runs in the second inning. Asher S. singled home two runs, Dylan D. followed with an RBI double, and Parker S. added another RBI single to stretch the lead to 9-0.

Groton broke through in the third inning when Hank Hill drove in the team's lone run.

Tucker Leicht started on the mound for Groton, allowing eight runs on eight hits over 1 1/3 innings. Brigham R. earned the win for SMFC, holding Groton scoreless on two hits over 2 2/3 innings while striking out five and walking four.

Hill finished 1-for-2 with Groton's only RBI. Carter Boerger, Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Bentley Ehresmann and Hill each collected one hit for Post 39, while the team showed patience at the plate by drawing six walks.

SMFC pounded out 16 hits, led by Asher S. and Hayes S., who each collected three hits. Asher drove in three runs, while Dylan D., Destry H. and Parker S. each added multiple-hit games. Parker S. also stole two bases.



Storm rolls through Groton

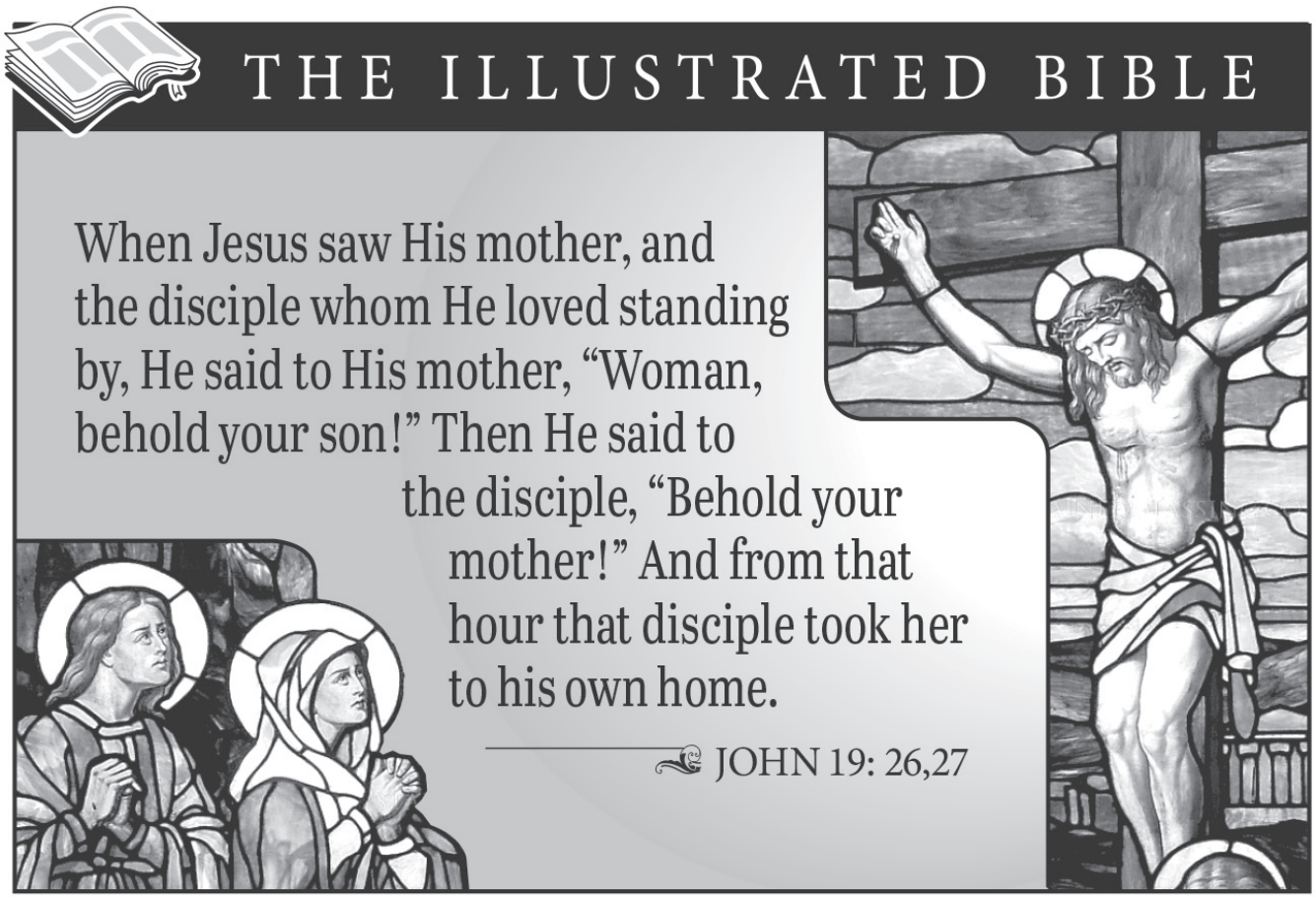
A severe storm rolled through Groton last evening, bring down branches and causing power outages.

The northern part of Groton (north of US 12) experienced an outage. After a review of the line, the breaker in the substation had tripped from an unknown issue. Power was restored shortly after the storm.

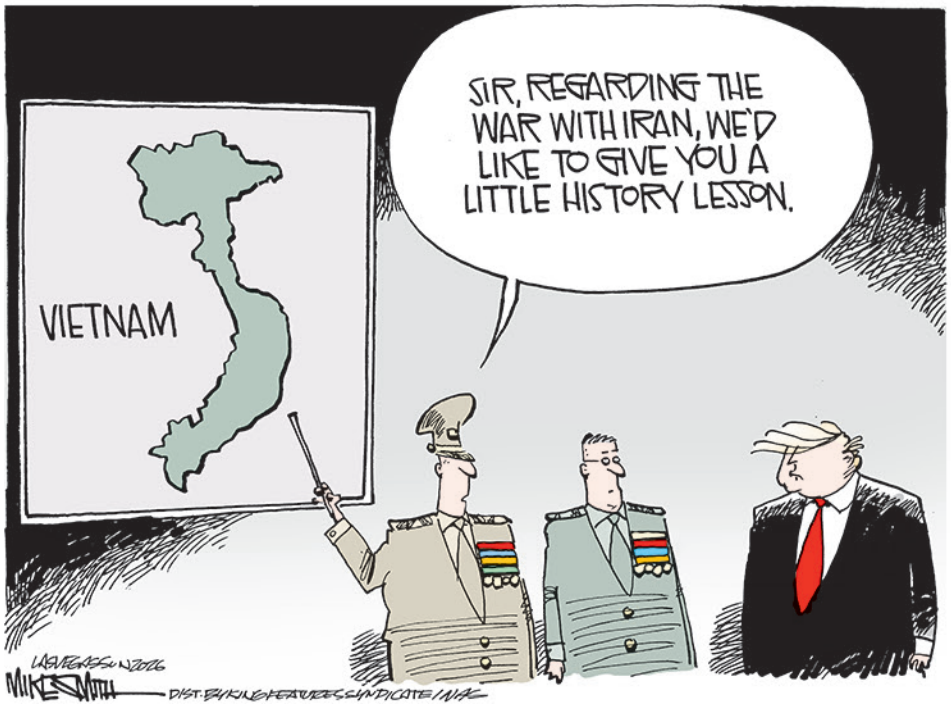
Then (left photo) behind the American Legion, a tree had fallen on the power line causing a ball of fire. It ended up burning all three primary phases. Paul Kosel and Teylor Diegel worked through the night, with the assistance of Ben Peterson from Northern Electric, to fix the lines and restore the power by 3 a.m. That circuit experienced a total brief outage was fuses were put into place.

The rain came down in sheets, dropping .71 of rain in the short period of time.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 8 of 80



© 2026 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.



Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 9 of 80

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Samaria (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. When he had a vision, who said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean"? *Adam, Reuben, Samson, Peter*

3. From Acts 7, who was the first person martyred for his belief in Jesus Christ? *Apollos, John the Baptist, Jehu, Stephen*

4. Besides Jonah, which other prophet ministered in Nineveh? *Nathan, Paul, Nahum, Philip*

5. From 1 Kings 11, what was the number of wives of King Solomon? *3, 50, 100, 700*

6. What is Yiddish for a small package or parcel? *Mishna, Pesach, Peckel, Shiva*

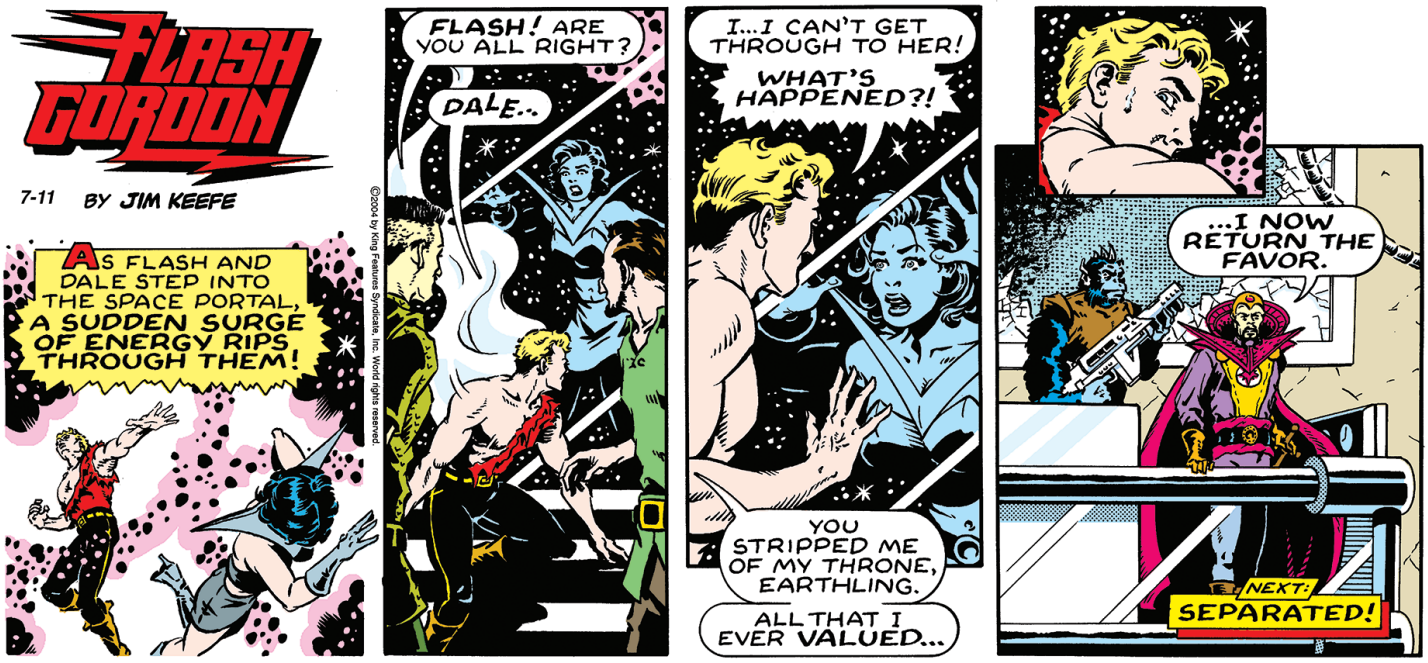
ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Peter, 3) Stephen, 4) Nahum, 5) 700, 6) Peckel

Find expanded trivia online with Wilson Casey at www.patreon.com/triviaguy. FREE TRIAL!

© 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

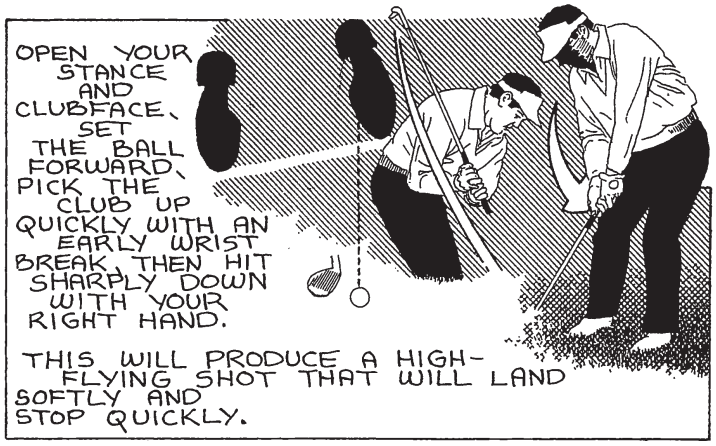
Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 10 of 80





Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 11 of 80



An Expensive Injection Is Indicated for Prostate CANCER Patient

DEAR DR. ROACH: About six years ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I chose to have a high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU), which ultimately wasn't successful. I was told that surgery after an HIFU was a high-risk option, so I chose to have radiation therapy to reduce the surgical risk of side effects like incontinence.

Prior to the start of the treatments, I was given an injection of leuprolide, presumably to interfere with testosterone production. There's also an injection that's scheduled for a couple of months after the completion of the radiation. I asked if the second shot was necessary and didn't get a definite answer.

What's your opinion? Not to mention, the cost of the first shot was $11,814, most of which was paid for by insurance. It's no wonder that insurance costs as much as it does. It can't possibly cost this much to manufacture the drug. -- E.B.

ANSWER: I can't answer your question about whether leuprolide is necessary for you without knowing more about your type of prostate cancer. For men with high-risk prostate cancer, this hormone-blocking treatment significantly improves the possibility of a good outcome.

For men who are at a low risk or a "favorable intermediate" risk, testosterone-blocking drugs usually aren't recommended. I suspect that you have a less-favorable intermediate risk, where four to six months of testosterone-blocking treatment is usually given.

The insurance cost that you were quoted is a retail price, and insurance companies negotiate a price that's usually much lower. In fact, the charges that you see on a hospital bill have a limited relationship with reality. There are also generic versions available for less than $200. Finally, there's a pill (relugolix) that's cheaper and doesn't produce the pain of the shot. It may work slightly better and faster.

***

DEAR DR. ROACH: I hear there are benefits to taking turmeric for arthritis. Can you please tell me about it? -- F.R.

ANSWER: Turmeric has shown benefit as a treatment for osteoarthritis -- the kind that most people get as they age. It isn't a treatment for inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid or psoriatic arthritis, which requires urgent treatment to prevent permanent joint damage. This discussion refers only to osteoarthritis.

Across many trials, turmeric has shown to have the equivalent effectiveness of traditional anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen or diclofenac (Voltaren). It appears superior to acetaminophen (Tylenol), even in a trial that directly compared the two. Turmeric helped most people with pain, stiffness and activity.

Although there are side effects that are associated with turmeric, they're generally mild. The most common symptoms are gastrointestinal, especially diarrhea, but some people note nausea or an upset stomach. The risk of side effects isn't much different from people taking a placebo (inactive) pill, and turmeric has significantly fewer side effects than anti-inflammatory drugs (and even acetaminophen).

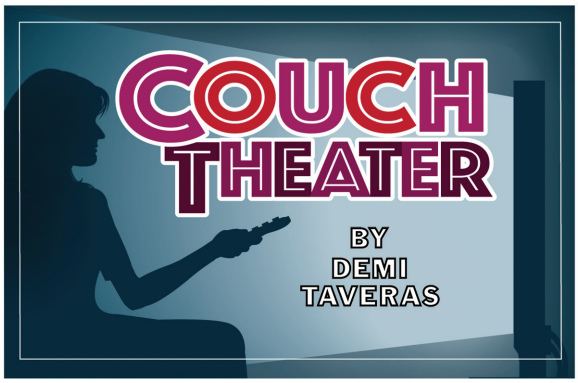
I found a single case report of liver failure that was thought to be attributable to turmeric. Turmeric has been used as a spice for millennia and is generally regarded as safe. The active ingredient in turmeric -- curcumin -- is often sold as a supplement, usually with another compound to improve its absorption such as piperine (an extract of black pepper).

For my patients who want to try a supplement for arthritis, I feel comfortable suggesting that they try turmeric or its extract, curcumin. In my opinion, at least a two-week trial is needed to see if there's a benefit or if there are any side effects. A pain diary before and after starting the medicine can help a person see if they're really receiving a benefit.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

(c) 2026 North America Synd., Inc.
All Rights Reserved

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 12 of 80





Mary Steenburgen, left, and Jake Johnson star in "The Dink." (Courtesy of Apple TV)

"Disclosure Day" (PG-13) -- Three-time Oscar-winning director Steven Spielberg's ("The Fabelmans") latest directorial feat is now available to rent, following a box-office stint that barely made double its $115 million budget. Spielberg signed on Emily Blunt ("The Devil Wears Prada 2") and Josh O'Connor ("Wake Up Dead Man") to respectively play his lead actors in the film -- an NBC meteorologist (Blunt) and a cybersecurity analyst (O'Connor), who join forces against the government to reveal the hard-kept secret of extraterrestrial life. Colin Firth ("Young Sherlock") portrays a government contractor who attempts to stop the duo in their tracks, while Colman Domingo ("Euphoria") takes on the role of another contractor who switches sides to become an advocate for disclosure. (Fandango)

"Supergirl" (PG-13) -- Another recently released film that didn't do so well in theaters will be available to rent starting on July 28. This superhero flick led by Milly Alcock ("House of the Dragon") follows David Corenswet's "Superman" as the second overall film within the new DC Universe. After Kara Zor-El, Superman's cousin, gets sent to Earth by her father to avoid Kryptonite poisoning, she adopts a new life on Earth as Supergirl with her dog, Krypto. As Supergirl reaches her 23rd birthday and has a party bender on different planets, Superman's concerned that she hasn't yet fully adapted to her life and role on Earth. But perhaps an intergalactic adventure is exactly what Kara needs to appreciate where she's been and where she'll go in the future. (YouTube)

"The Dink" (PG-13) -- Jake Johnson ("New Girl") leads this new sports-comedy film that is out now to stream -- right on time for it to compete with Will Ferrell's series "The Hawk" (which basically has the same plot but with golf!). "The Dink" follows a cocky, washed-up tennis pro Dusty Boyd (Johnson), who suffers a hand injury before a big duel. When his doctor prescribes pickleball as a strategy to ease back into tennis, Dusty's very reluctant to grab a paddle and take his place alongside the older ladies on the court. But as he embarks on his pickleball journey, he also learns some important life lessons - undoubtedly thanks to his kind and wise teammate, Candace (Mary Steenburgen). Look out for former pro tennis players John McEnroe and Andy Roddick to make appearances throughout the film as well. (Apple TV)

"Ride or Die" (TV-MA) -- This action-comedy series stars Octavia Spencer ("Smurfs") and Hannah Waddingham ("The Woman in Cabin 10") as two best friends who don't really know much about each other. One friend, Debbie (Spencer), is the wife of a member of Parliament, while the other, Judith (Waddingham), is secretly a deadly assassin. While Judith usually keeps mum about her job, the two besties are forced to go on the run with mercenaries hot on their trail after a hit gone wrong. With no other options but to put her faith -- and life -- in Judith's hands, Debbie succumbs to being an assassin's accomplice, hoping that she's still in one piece by the end of the mission. All eight episodes are out now to stream! (Amazon Prime Video)

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 13 of 80



1. Both Frankie Avalon (in 1959) and Shocking Blue (in 1969) had different songs with the same title. What was that title?

2. Which artist had the best known version of "Snowbird"?

3. Name the singer who released "Don't Forget I Still Love You."

4. Who wrote and released "Leader of the Band"?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I hope this letter finds its way to you, Forgive me love for the shame I've put you through and all the tears."

Answers

1. "Venus." The Shocking Blue version topped the charts around the globe while Avalon saw his first No. 1 hit with the song.

2. Anne Murray, in 1970. It topped the adult contemporary chart in both Murray's native Canada and the U.S.

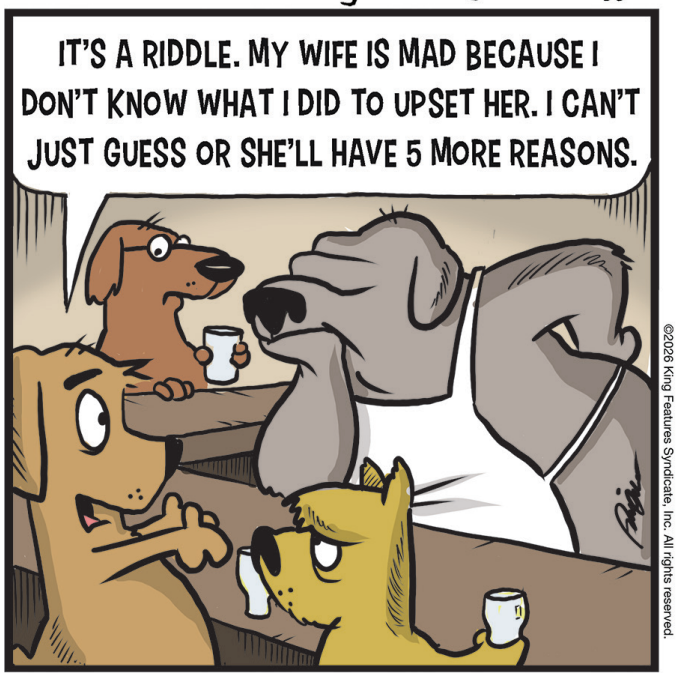
3. Bobbi Martin, in 1964. Martin was best known for her self-penned "For the Love of Him" in 1970.

4. Dan Fogelberg, in 1981.

5. "Indiana Wants Me," by R. Dean Taylor in 1970. Originally there was a siren at the beginning of the record and drivers were pulling over, thinking it was the police behind them. The record producer had to distribute copies to radio stations without the siren.

(c) 2026 King Features Syndicate

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

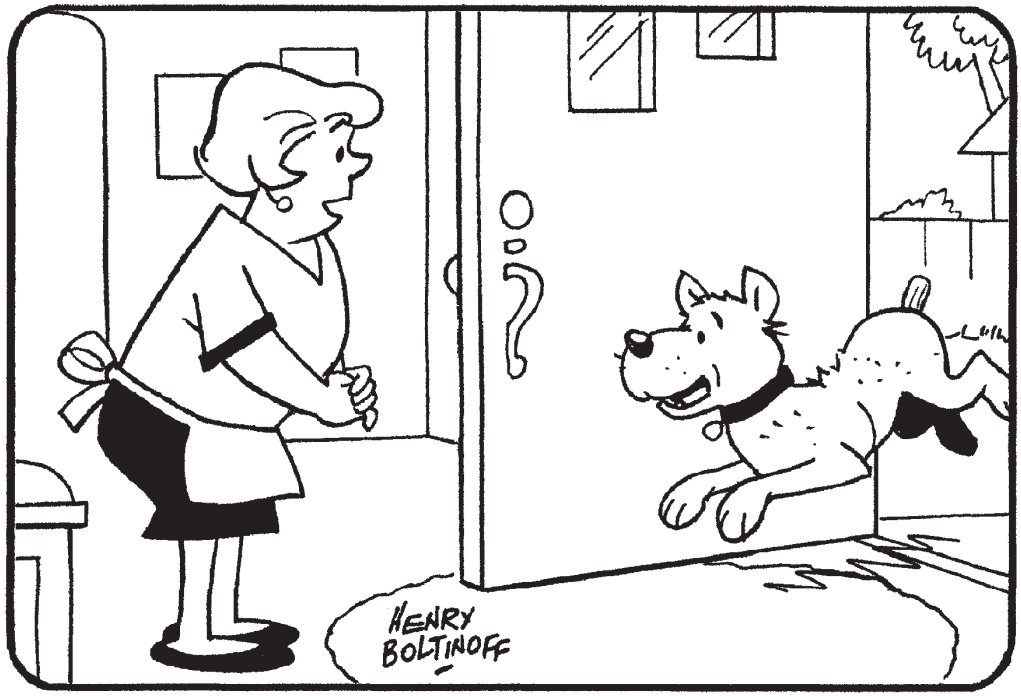


"Don't ever let her get her hands on a power tool!"

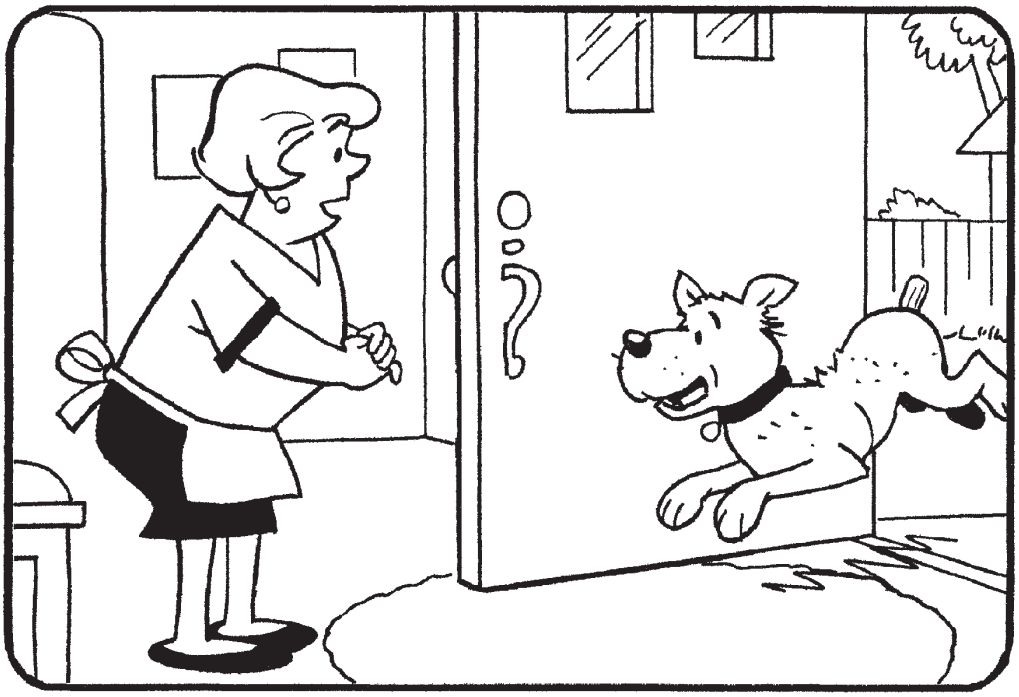
Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 14 of 80

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Differences: 1. Dog's leg is moved. 2. Woman's leg is moved. 3. Bush is reversed. 4. Arms are higher. 5. Dog's ear is different. 6. Fence has more boards.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 15 of 80



* "When I needed a new tire for my truck because I ran over a nail, the shop guy suggested I purchase a slightly used tire that was closer to the age and wear of the others. I spent less on the tire, and the tires will wear evenly. They're always looking out for me!" -- O.E. in Mississippi

* When baby's teething, try this trick from a grandma: Wet a washcloth and put it in a zip-top baggie in the freezer. When frozen, let the baby chew on it. Its texture and temperature are soothing to little gums, and it can be rinsed and refrozen easily.

* For fresh oil stains, sprinkle with kitty litter and grind into the oil with your foot or a stiff brush. Then sweep up. Repeat as necessary.

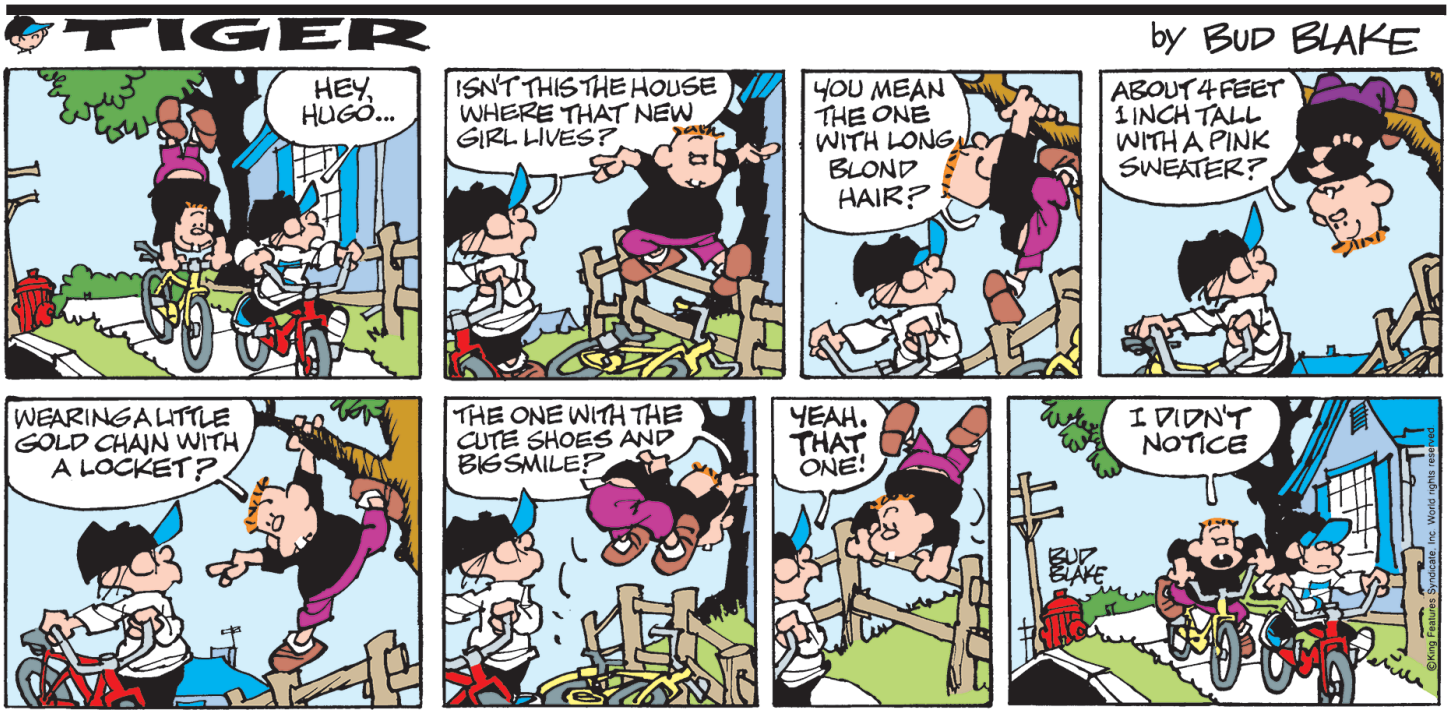
* "Hardware stores sell special bladders that can be filled and put inside a toilet tank to take up space, allowing the toilet to use less water per flush. I use a brick. Same effect." -- C.L. in Kansas

* "Dusting shelves with lots of knickknacks can be a real chore. Try slipping a knee-high stocking over the hose of your vacuum wand. You can get very close to the items on the shelf without sucking anything up but dust. If something did get sucked up, the stocking will catch it for you. This also works for toolboxes." -- W.U. in South Carolina

* "Over-the-door shoe racks are perfect for holding a variety of cleaning products and small cannisters of wipes. I have everything I need at a glance on the back of the utility-room door. I even store batteries in various sizes there." -- A.A. in Colorado

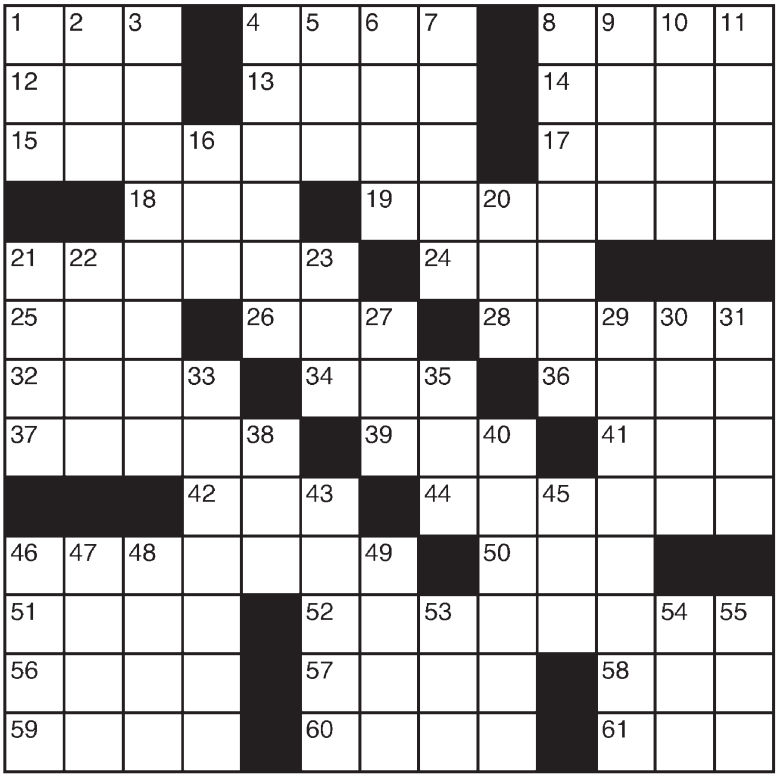
Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 1800 Pembrook Dr., Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32810.

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.



Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 16 of 80

King Crossword



ACROSS
1 Photo, for short
4 Senate staffer
8 Scoff
12 Rx overseer
13 Classic theaters
14 Bohemian
15 Tunes from Trinidad
17 Pinta's companion
18 MSN rival
19 Acapulco native
21 NAACP co-founder W.E.B.
24 Collection
25 — Cruz Kayne of "Barbie"
26 D.C. baseballer
28 Serious
32 Overlook
34 Inherited
36 "Little Caesar" role
37 Group spirit
39 Rug cleaner, briefly
41 Buddy
42 Felon's flight
44 Arctic shoe
46 Bitter orange liqueur
50 French monarch
51 Unsigned (Abbr.)
52 All-important
56 Male deer
57 Notes after "do"
58 Bird (Pref.)
59 Harboring a grudge
60 "I'm a klutz!"
61 Napkin's perch

DOWN
1 Cpl.'s subordinate
2 Wyo. neighbor
3 Utensil made from a gourd shell
4 Sturdy fabric
5 Billboards
6 Euclidean subj.
7 Relaxes
8 Custodian
9 Rocker Clapton
10 Sicilian volcano
11 Vanna's "Wheel of Fortune" colleague
16 "— -hoo!"
20 Crosses (out)
21 Title for Judi Dench
22 One
23 Droop
27 "Mazel —!"
29 Scripture-based
30 Beige
31 Castle
33 Singer Knowles
35 Highland hat
38 Pouch
40 Actress Jamie Lee
43 PC shortcut
45 Japanese pond carp
46 Mama — Elliot
47 Golden Rule word
48 Den noise
49 Black-and-white cookie
53 Little rascal
54 Hollywood's Gardner
55 Sass

© 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 17 of 80

— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

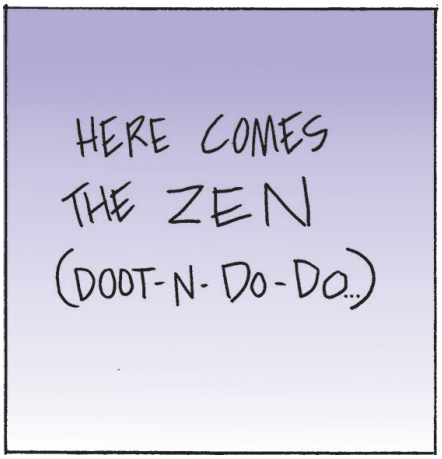
P	I	C	■	P	A	G	E	■	J	E	E	R
F	D	A	■	O	D	E	A	■	A	R	T	Y
C	A	L	Y	P	S	O	S	■	N	I	N	A
■	■	A	O	L	■	M	E	X	I	C	A	N
D	U	B	O	I	S	■	S	E	T	■	■	■
A	N	A	■	N	A	T	■	S	O	B	E	R
M	I	S	S	■	G	O	T	■	R	I	C	O
E	T	H	O	S	■	V	A	C	■	B	R	O
■	■	■	L	A	M	■	M	U	K	L	U	K
C	U	R	A	C	A	O	■	R	O	I	■	■
A	N	O	N	■	C	R	I	T	I	C	A	L
S	T	A	G	■	R	E	M	I	■	A	V	I
S	O	R	E	■	O	O	P	S	■	L	A	P

Olive

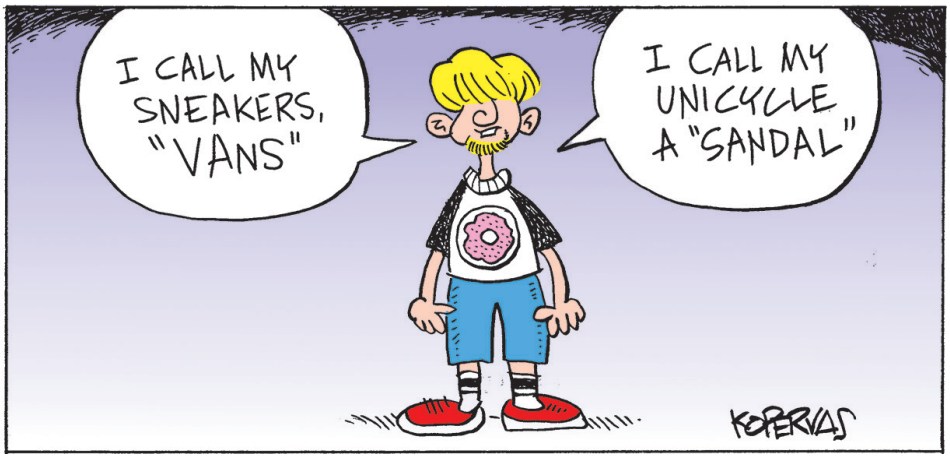


Out on a Limb

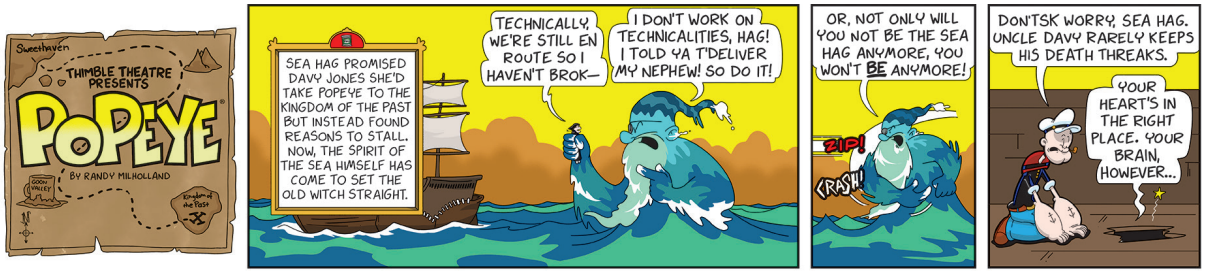
by Gary Kopervas

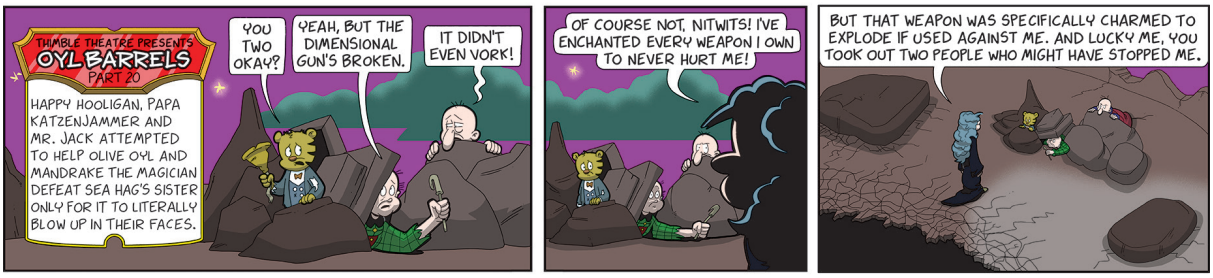


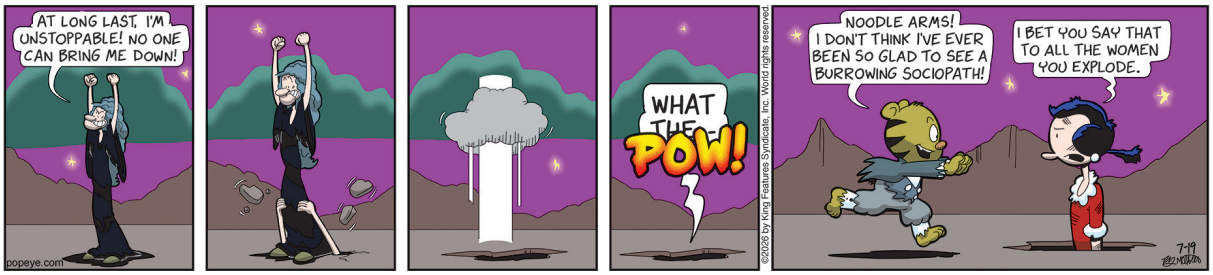
©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

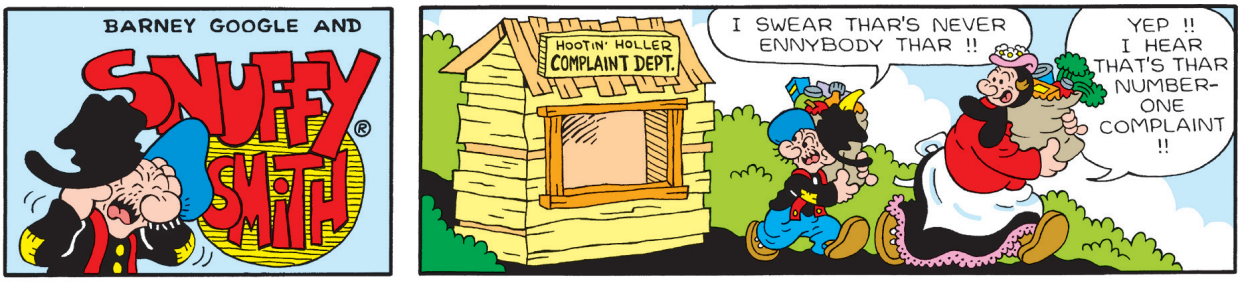


Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 18 of 80

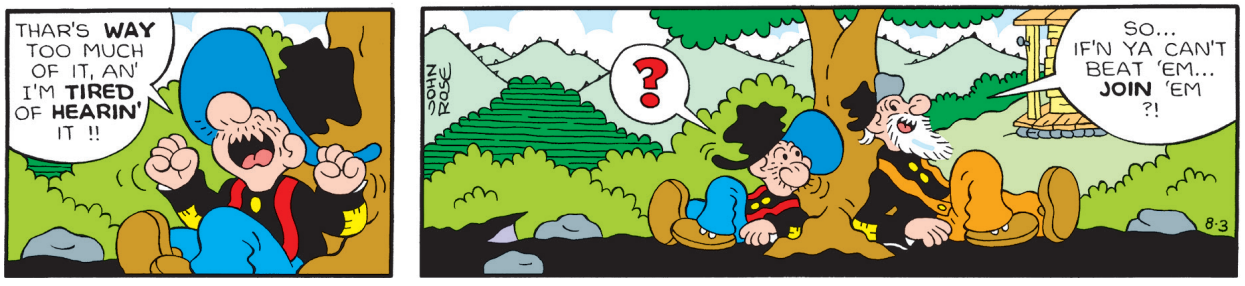




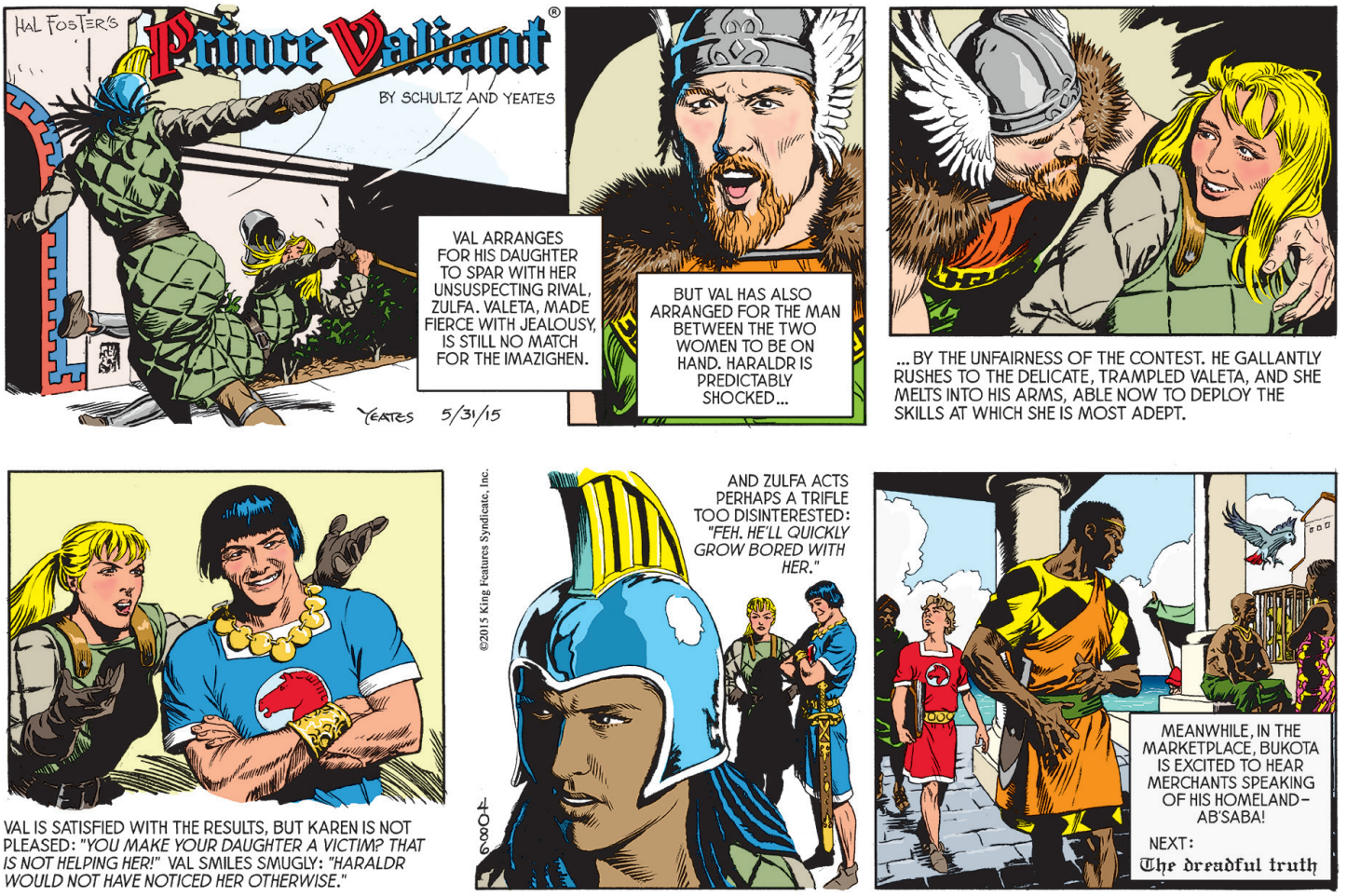






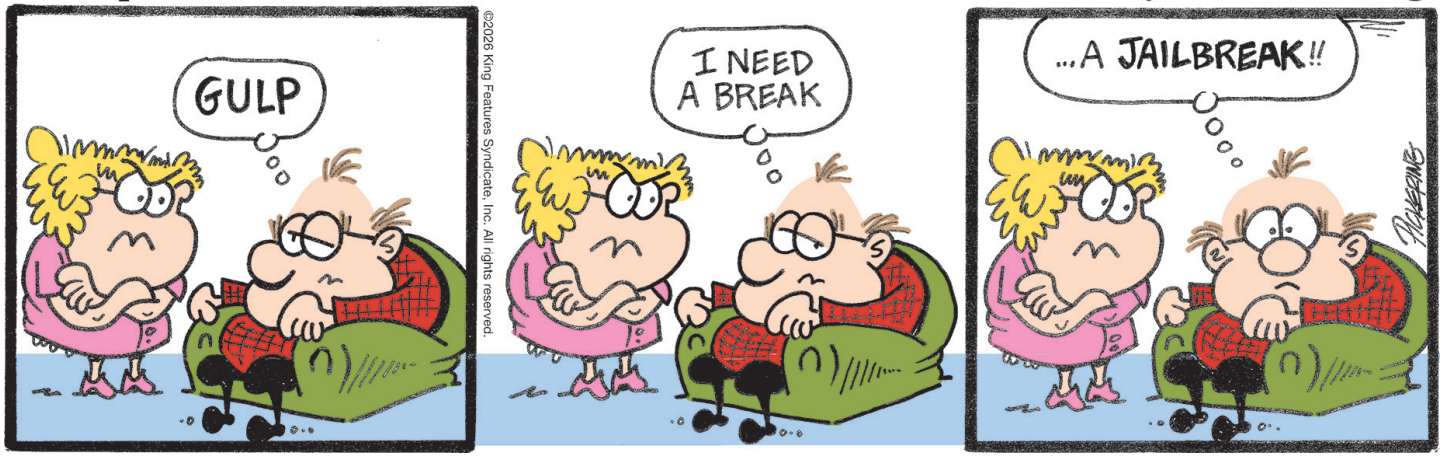


Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 19 of 80



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 20 of 80

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Just do ... something

"It's never too late to start." That's the word from a health professor at a large university on the topic of health behaviors as we age. Specifically she was talking about habits we need to prioritize in our 60s and 70s. The long-term goal: to maintain mobility and our independence as we age further.

Here are two things they suggest:

Balance - Long-term studies show that seniors who can stand on one leg for 10 seconds or more had lower rates of mortality and falls.

Take at look at the Mayo Clinic site (www.mayoclinic.org). Do a search for "balance exercises" for good ideas on how to get the most out of this. Mayo recommends aiming for holding the balance position for 30 seconds. The biggest benefits are strengthening the legs, ankles and core.

Strength training - It was pointed out that it's too easy to become weak as we age. Whether we follow the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines of getting 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise a week or we focus on simple at-home exercises combined with daily walking, we just need to do something.

When it comes to how many daily steps we do, that's going to depend on what "expert source" we read, because they vary. But most agree that if you've been very sedentary, try to start with 3,000 to 4,000 steps per day and ease your way up to the 6,000 to 8,000 range. If that seems like too much in a day, break it down into groups of perhaps 10 to 15 minutes at a time. It's not how many you do all at once; it's how many you do in a day or a week. It all adds up.

It you've been very sedentary, consider checking YouTube for seated chair exercises. Remember, just do something!

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101
Downtown Groton
Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285
GDI
Open 24/7
Living Heart Fitness Center
Senior Citizens 65+
Physical Therapy.
$20 a month



1. In 1980, who did Major League Baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn present with lifetime passes to any major or minor league baseball game?

2. Which team was set to join the American Basketball Association in 1975, but played only three exhibition games before being expelled from the league due to financial woes?

3. He won a Super Bowl XXXVII ring as a running back for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. His son, a wide receiver from USC, was chosen by the Indianapolis Colts in the second round of the 2020 NFL Draft. Who are they?

4. Where was the 1942 Rose Bowl played after being relocated from California in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack?

5. Name the Australian tennis player who won the 1987 Wimbledon gentlemen's singles championship.

6. In 1943, brothers Max, Doug and Reg Bentley played together on the same line for what NHL team?

7. Long-distance runner Emil Zatopek won three gold medals at the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympics competing for what country?

Answers

1. The 52 hostages freed by Iran.

2. The Baltimore Claws.

3. Michael Pittman and Michael Pittman Jr.

4. Duke Stadium in Durham, North Carolina.

5. Pat Cash.

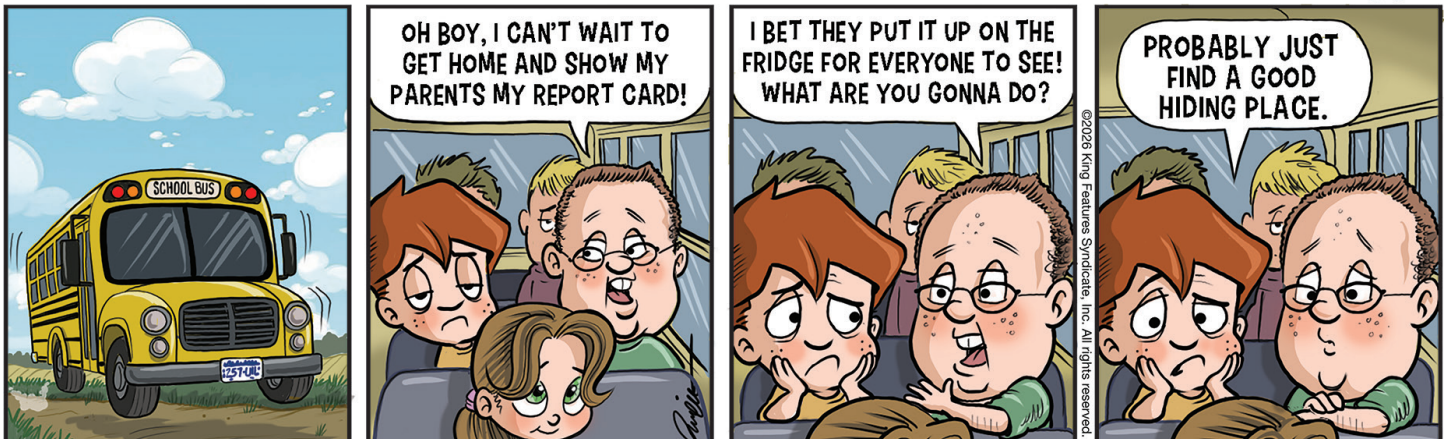
6. The Chicago Blackhawks.

7. Czechoslovakia.

(c) 2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 22 of 80



Hot pavement is a danger to pets

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Walking around the farmer's market this weekend, I confronted several people who brought their dogs into the market despite clear signage saying pets aren't allowed. The reason for the sign is that the pavement is HOT! Summer temperatures regularly reach 90 to 100 degrees or more. All the dogs were limping and whining because the pads on their paws were burning! Please tell your readers to leave their pets at home and respect signs that say no pets. -- Jeremy C. in Denver

DEAR JEREMY: Absolutely! Folks, please know that pavement on a hot summer day is 40 to 50 degrees higher than the air temperature. On a hundred-degree day, pavement can reach 150 degrees Fahrenheit. In seconds, that kind of heat can cause second- and third-degree burns on a dog's paws.

Add to that the issue of ignoring "no pets" signs. The venue put up that sign for good reasons. Failure to respect that sign puts the pet owner at risk of footing the bill for any damage or injuries their dog might cause. Good pet owners respect the rules.

In the meantime, test the pavement before taking your dog out on it. Put your hand on the sidewalk or even your bare foot. If it's uncomfortably hot for you, it'll be just as bad for your dog.

Walk pets in the early morning or late in the evening. Inspect their paws after every walk for tender spots. If your dog's paws sustain a heat injury, stand them in cool water or place a cool, damp pad on each paw -- don't use ice. Take them to the emergency vet if you see blisters or your dog is visibly limping.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 23 of 80

Strange BUT TRUE

* Masculine features are more attractive to a woman during her ovulation cycle, while softer, nurturing-looking features are preferred at other times.

* NBC's "Saturday Night Live" has won more Emmys than any other TV show.

* The verb "lynch" is generally believed to have originated with Virginia landowner Charles Lynch, who during the American Revolution conducted unauthorized trials and punishments outside the formal court system.

* According to Greek mythology, the Milky Way formed when the goddess Hera spilled milk across the night sky.

* The irresistible desire to steal books is known as bibliokleptomania.

* In the popular 18th-century "Flying Boy" experiment, English scientist Stephen Gray harmlessly electrified a boy suspended by silk cords, astonishing audiences as the boy's hair stood on end and sparks flew from his nose.

* Multiplication tables are also called the "Table of Pythagoras," after the Ionian Greek philosopher and mathematician.

* Chewbacca's voice in "Star Wars" was created by mixing the sounds of bears, lions, walruses and badgers.

* The University of Bologna, Italy, which was founded in 1088, is the oldest university in Europe. The term "university" was coined at its creation and it is still considered a leader in European university systems. Its notable alumni include Pope Innocent IX and Copernicus.

* The first acoustic guitars made hundreds of years ago had four, as opposed to six, strings.

* Doctors leave sponges and other medical devices inside of their patients about 6,000 times a year.

* Some critics theorize that zombies gnaw on humans because their warm flesh may have to do with a virus needing fresh DNA or some parasitic microorganism that receives a form of nourishment from live blood cells.

***

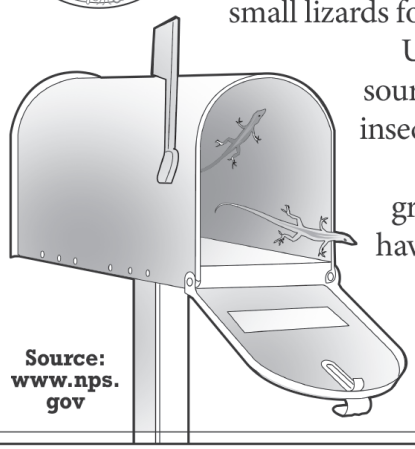
Thought for the Day: "In nothing do men more nearly approach the gods than in giving health to men." -- Marcus Tullius Cicero

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

The Garden Bug

Anoles

Both the native green anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) and the non-native brown anole (*Anolis sagrei*) are small lizards found in the southeastern parts of the United States. They compete for food sources by preying on many of the same insects, such as crickets, moths and flies. A green anole can actually be either green or brown, and both species also have the distinctive pink-to-red dewlap they frequently display. However, brown anoles have more distinctive patterns on their skin. – *Brenda Weaver*



Source: www.nps.gov

© 2026 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 24 of 80

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Applying for VA health care

I ran into a guy recently, a fellow veteran, who I hadn't talked to in years. And he was limping, badly. When I asked, he said he needed knee surgery and couldn't afford it.

I asked if he'd looked into VA health care, and he replied that he'd applied years ago and got nowhere with the VA, so he gave up.

Before we even left the store, I had my phone out and placed a call to the local VSO (veteran service officer). I got the two of them hooked up with an appointment and the VSO is going to walk my friend through all the paperwork.

It should not be this hard for a veteran to get health care.

A big problem is that many veterans tried to deal with the VA years ago, became frustrated and gave up, not realizing that things have changed.

If you were turned down for VA health care, apply again. The PACT Act has changed many things, including expanded locations for exposure to Agent Orange and two dozen new presumptive conditions. If you got hung up trying to get Community Care, try again. The rules are different now.

Or if you never had VA health care, sign up now. Go to the website (www.va.gov) and search for VA Form 10-10EZ. Check whether you're eligible for VA health care. Have your DD-214 handy and any other military paperwork you have. The online process takes about a half hour.

If you don't think you can handle the online application process yourself, look for a local VSO. See www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative. Or call the MyVA411 information line at 800-698-2411. They're open 24/7. You can also contact the American Legion near you or the DAV.

A VSO can do a lot of things for you: tell you about the benefits you're supposed to get, assemble documents, help with appeals and so much more.

Or call the benefits hotline at 877-222-8387 to ask about enrolling in VA health care by phone.

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 25 of 80

Wishing Well®

8	5	6	7	2	7	2	4	5	2	5	3	5
K	P	S	T	T	A	I	A	S	M	Y	C	C
6	2	7	2	5	6	2	7	6	2	7	5	8
O	E	K	F	H	C	O	E	I	R	A	I	E
5	3	2	5	4	2	7	8	2	5	4	2	3
C	L	Y	E	S	O	C	E	U	X	K	R	E
8	6	4	3	5	8	7	4	2	6	8	4	2
P	A	F	V	P	C	T	O	S	L	H	R	E
6	5	4	2	3	6	7	2	5	3	4	3	5
A	E	A	L	E	C	I	F	R	R	D	I	I
7	5	6	5	4	8	4	5	4	3	5	6	4
O	E	C	N	V	I	I	C	C	D	E	L	E
8	7	3	6	8	6	8	6	3	7	3	7	7
N	N	E	A	U	I	P	M	A	N	S	O	W

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

©2026 King Features Syndicate



1. GAMES: What is the goal space in the board game Candy Land?
2. GEOGRAPHY: How many countries and territories border Spain?
3. TELEVISION: What are Captain Picard's two favorite catchphrases in "Star Trek: The Next Generation"?
4. FOOD & DRINK: What is brioche?
5. CHEMISTRY: Which metal has the highest melting point?
6. LITERATURE: Who is credited as the author of "The Odyssey"?
7. U.S. STATES: Which state is home to Acadia National Park?
8. MOVIES: What is the name of Dottie's team in "A League of Their Own"?
9. COMICS: Who is the archenemy of the Fantastic Four?
10. SCIENCE: What is the thickest layer of Earth?

Answers

1. King Kandy's Castle.
2. Five — Portugal, France, Andorra, Morocco and the British territory of Gibraltar.
3. "Make it so" and "Engage."
4. A rich French bread.
5. Tungsten.
6. The poet Homer.
7. Maine.
8. The Rockford Peaches.
9. Doctor Doom.
10. The mantle.

© 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 26 of 80

South Dakota Governor

Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Building a Legacy

Since the day I took office, I have challenged everyone in my administration to focus on keeping South Dakota strong, safe, and free. If we all link arms and pledge to chase opportunities together, our state will remain an example to the nation. And if years from now, someone remembers the work we accomplished together, then that's just a bonus. Ultimately, it comes down to building a strong future for our kids and grandkids – that's the legacy we're building.

The passing of someone like T. Denny Sanford causes me to pause and think about what it means to build a legacy. T. Denny was the greatest philanthropist in South Dakota history. His contributions will impact our state for decades – maybe centuries. If you know of a student that has benefited from the Build Dakota Scholarship or Freedom Scholarship, or perhaps know someone that has been helped by Children's Home Society, or someone who has benefited from access to high quality healthcare in our rural state; then you have experienced a piece of Denny's impact on the quality of life of South Dakota.

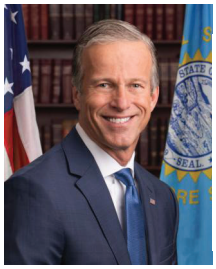
We are called to serve each other. The list of goodwill that Mr. Sanford has spread is difficult to inventory in just a few words. But ultimately, when he saw a need, he stepped in to make a difference. This shows his heart of service. Whether it is millions of dollars, hours of our time, or use of our best talents, we don't do these things to be remembered. We do them because they are right.

When I think about the people that have left a good legacy, it is easy to see a commonality of a passion to leave this earth better than they found it. They also share an understanding of the reward for a willingness to slow down. They never confuse motion with progress. Instead, they remain focused on the long game. It can be difficult to move methodically while the "idea fairies" are flitting around in circles, but discipline is a must.

When I look back at my time in public service, all the way back to serving in the National Guard, there are moments that rise higher in my memory. But none of the moments on the list matter without hard work and integrity. And integrity is measured, in part, by the people who surround us. I've been credited with many successes, but oftentimes the people around me deserve the credit. The day I was sworn in as Governor, I thanked our people for this privilege, my wife, Sandy, for her loyal support, and the Good Lord for guiding my mind and my heart. I still feel this gratitude every day as I serve as Governor of the great state of South Dakota.

Whether in basic training camp, an evening school board meeting, hours in the House and Senate Chambers in Pierre, or traveling the state as Governor to understand what South Dakota needs, I know this to be true: the opportunity of our state is not limited by my vision, or even the vision of any one person – not even T. Denny Sanford. Our opportunity is as broad as the South Dakota prairie and as high as the Black Hills. If we work hard and put others first, things tend to work out. If we do the job with integrity, it will stick with people. If we are creating value that outlasts a lifetime, that's when we have the honor to build a legacy.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 27 of 80



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Securing the Border for Good

Under President Biden, the southern border was a mess. Thousands of illegal immigrants were crossing the border every single day, Border Patrol agents were overwhelmed, and the consequences of this chaos were affecting communities around the country, including in South Dakota. The worst part: It was avoidable. But President Biden chose not to enforce our laws and secure the border, and chaos reigned as a result.

Border security isn't a choice, it's an obligation. After he took office last year, President Trump wasted no time securing the border. We saw illegal crossings drop precipitously, and border agents weren't spread so thin anymore, so they could spend more time stopping cartels and other criminals. The police chief in Sioux Falls has even said that "some of the measures taken within the southern border are paying dividends within our community."

This is the way things should be, and last summer Republicans provided resources in the Working Families Tax Cuts to ensure the border stays secure for years to come. This landmark bill provides the resources necessary to finish the border wall and deploy additional barriers and technology to secure the border. There was funding to support hiring new border agents and to bring on more immigration judges to address the massive backlog in immigration cases.

Those resources are making a difference. Thanks to President Trump and the Working Families Tax Cuts, as of the end of last month apprehensions at the southern border are 94 percent lower than they were under the Biden administration. Border Patrol is seeing a few hundred border crossings on a typical day – compared to as many as 10,000 in a single day at times under President Biden. And not a single illegal immigrant has been released from the border in more than a year.

Meanwhile, Democrats continue to embrace open borders. After complicity with the Biden border crisis, Democrats opposed the border security measures in the Working Families Tax Cuts. Then, earlier this year, Democrats took an even more radical position: defunding Border Patrol and ICE. Fortunately, their radical position did not carry the day.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Rapid City with Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin. It was great to meet the South Dakotans working in federal law enforcement and to hear about the work that they are doing with South Dakota law enforcement to keep our communities safe – work made possible by a program we bolstered in the Working Families Tax Cuts.

The security of our country and our communities is an important responsibility. Without it, nothing else much matters. I appreciate the law enforcement officers in South Dakota who go to work every day to keep us safe, and I'm proud to be working to support them and provide safer streets for South Dakotans and for all Americans.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 28 of 80



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries
PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483
1-352-216-3025

I Found Another Button To Push

Life has its many experiences. I'm about to hit number 75 this month, a big experience for me.

I'm not sure how to celebrate my 75th birthday, especially since I've done just about everything, so no 75 candles on my cake.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's birthday is two days after mine. Also, she's two years older than me, but you didn't hear me say that.

When we go across town for any business, we always take The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's Sissy Van. After all, she does not like riding in my truck. Also, she prefers to sit behind the steering wheel. I don't like to sit there because it takes me almost an hour to get in behind that wheel. I don't know if the Sissy Van is too small or if I'm just too big.

Personally, I don't mind her driving her Sissy Van. I can barely get into the passenger side, but I do. Every time I ride in the Sissy Van, I learn to appreciate my truck all the more.

My truck is a man's vehicle. I enjoy getting behind the steering wheel and drive around town. It's my way of exercising my manhood.

The Sissy Van is a completely different situation. I've been riding with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage for several years now, and I hope it will be a lot more years ahead.

Almost a month ago, I had one of those "moments." I don't often get "moments" like this, but when I do, I like to take advantage of it.

Over the years of riding in the Sissy Van, I have discovered certain "buttons" to push. It took me a long time to discover this, but once I did, it made riding that much more pleasant for me.

I have always enjoyed figuring out certain "buttons" to push on the people around me. I've always got a kick out of that, and there have been times I have gotten into trouble. But the trouble has always been worth it in my opinion.

As we were driving across town, I started pushing those "buttons."

Coming to a traffic light that had just turned red I said, "The light is red and you need to stop."

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage just looked at me after we had come to a stop at the red light. It was all I could do to keep from laughing. But I managed it.

When the light turned green, I said to her, "The light is green and you need to get going."

All I heard from the other side was a deep sigh. I'm not sure how I'm going to be able to keep from laughing, but I'm going to work on it as long as I can.

We were going across town to celebrate our birthday at a restaurant.

When we left the restaurant, we were going to a store for The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage to purchase some supplies for her craft room. We stopped at a red light, and a lady was crossing the road, and I said, "Oh, my dear, don't hit that lady."

There is a deep sigh going on on the other side of the front seat.

After the stoplight, we were to turn left. So as the light turned green, I said, "You need to turn left right here."

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage didn't say anything at that time, but I knew that marbles were rolling in her head. I sure do love pushing buttons.

When she got back from the store and got into the Sissy Van, and before she turned the engine on, she looked at me and said, "Are you having a crazy episode?"

Looking at her, I calmly said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, yes you do. And if you want me to drive home you're gonna have to let me do the driving."

It was then that I lost control and started laughing. As I looked at her, I noticed that she was not laughing.

"I'm sorry," I said, "I was just having a little bit of fun."

Looking at me, she replied, "You may think it's fun but you don't see me laughing, do you?"

She started the engine up, and we left the parking lot and headed home. Whenever she came to a traffic light to stop, she would look at me with one of her looks and say, "Don't say a word."

It was all I could do to keep from laughing. I found new buttons to push, and I'm happy about it.

While I was thinking about this, a Bible verse came to mind.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Thinking of this scripture challenged me to use my time uplifting the people around me instead of pushing their "buttons". To encourage someone in his or her life is probably the most important thing I can do. I may be the only person that can do that in someone's life. I'm going to focus on that for the rest of my life.

My focus will be finding the encouragement "buttons." I may be the only person in their life who can push that "button".

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 30 of 80

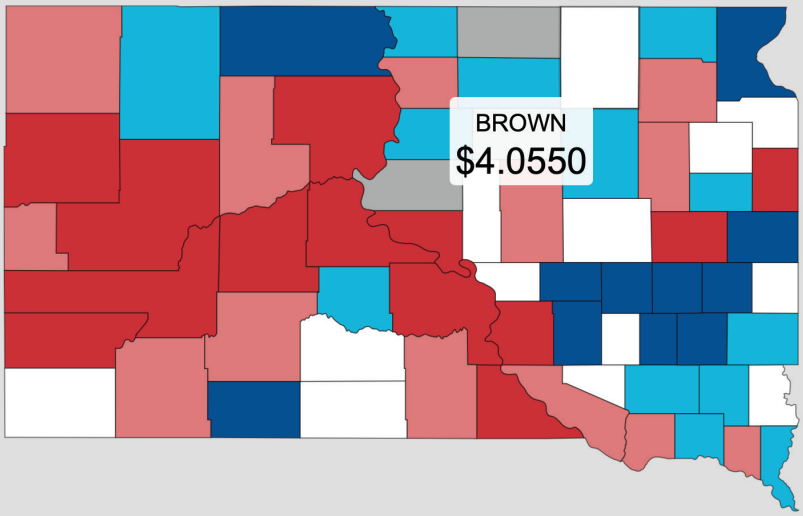
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
$4.0420	$4.2040	$4.7180	$4.8800	
Yesterday Avg.	$4.0380	$4.2130	$4.6900	$4.8420
Week Ago Avg.	$3.8960	$4.0600	$4.5730	$4.5740
Month Ago Avg.	$3.7990	$4.0320	$4.4890	$4.3930
Year Ago Avg.	$3.0130	$3.1790	$3.6530	$3.3990

This Week

Today's AAA National Average
$4.1110
Price as of 7/25/26

Today's AAA South Dakota Avg.
$4.0420
Price as of 7/25/26



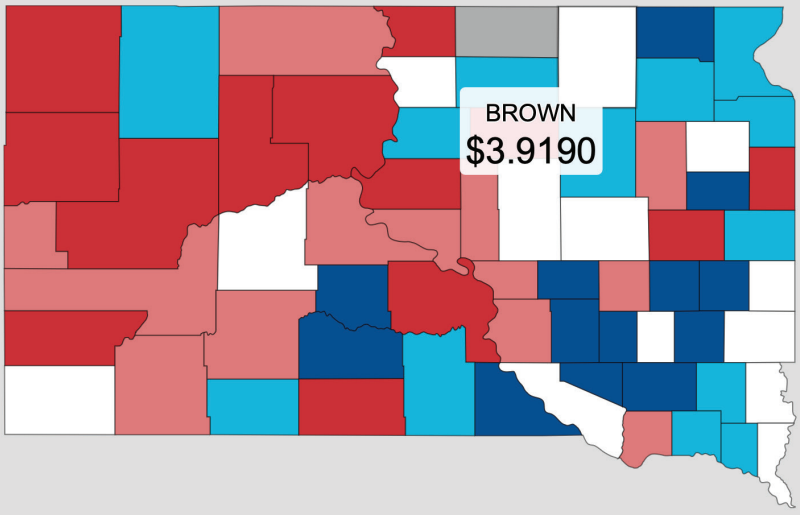
County Retail Prices
- 4.4160 to 4.1760
- 4.1750 to 4.0890
- 4.0880 to 3.9860
- 3.9850 to 3.8420
- 3.8410 to 3.6790
- No Data Available

County average gas prices are updated daily to reflect changes in price. For metro averages, click here.

Last Week

Today's AAA National Average
$3.9920
Price as of 7/18/26

Today's AAA South Dakota Avg.
$3.8960
Price as of 7/18/26



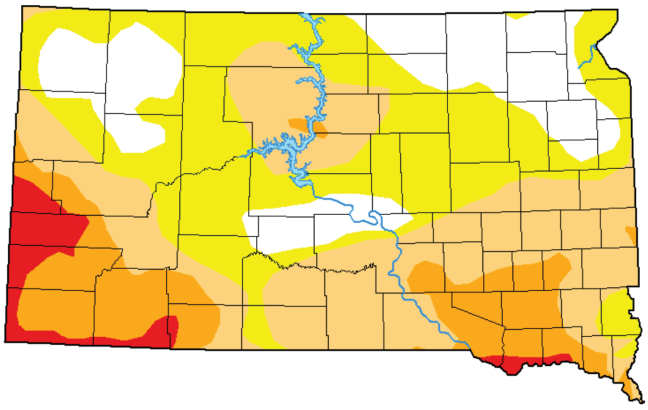
County Retail Prices
- 4.3190 to 4.0760
- 4.0750 to 3.9570
- 3.9560 to 3.8260
- 3.8250 to 3.7420
- 3.7410 to 3.3990
- No Data Available

County average gas prices are updated daily to reflect changes in price. For metro averages, click here.

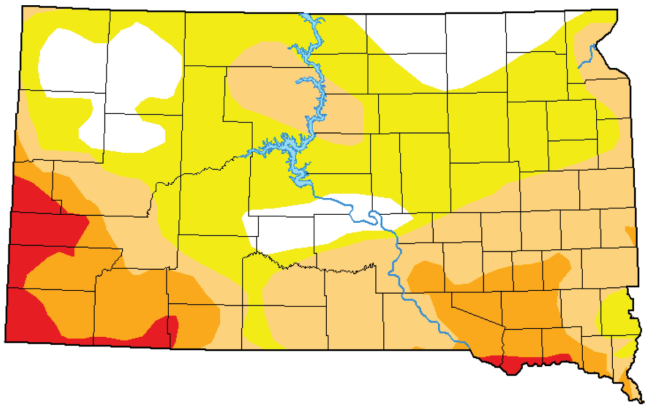
Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 31 of 80



Drought Monitor



July 21



July 14

On this week's map, drought-related conditions deteriorated across the region including in the Dakotas and Nebraska with reports of rapidly deteriorating conditions. The recent anomalously hot temperatures and deteriorating drought-related conditions led to the South Dakota Governor issuing a drought emergency executive order last week. In terms of drought impacts, the National Drought Mitigation Center's Condition Monitoring Observer Report (CMOR) drought impacts reporting system is showing numerous impact reports across the Dakotas during the past 30 days. For the week, average temperatures were 4 to 10+ °F above normal across the Dakotas and Nebraska. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, several locations logged near-record dryness including Omaha, NE (3rd driest on record; -3.16 inches); Grand Island, NE (5th driest; -3.05 inches); and Rapid City NWS Weather Forecast Office, SD (5th driest; -1.48 inches).

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 32 of 80

SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT
https://southdakotasearchlight.com

State fund helps 911 centers consolidate, with more mergers on the way

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota has awarded more than $630,000 in the last year to facilitate three emergency dispatch consolidations, using funds from a statewide fee increase on phone lines that lawmakers approved to support efficiency and equipment upgrades.

The consolidations were recommended in a 2025 efficiency report commissioned by the South Dakota 911 Coordination Board. The report recommended the board financially assist consolidation efforts and target consolidations of centers with low call volumes, staffing shortages and high costs per 911 call.

The board created a grant program last year for consolidation costs and equipment upgrades using a portion of funds from a statewide $2 monthly fee on phone lines and 2% tax on prepaid wireless services. State lawmakers raised the fee from $1.25 to $2 in 2024 and made the increase permanent last year.

The board puts $80,000 a month into the 911 efficiency grant fund, which currently has $640,000 in it.

Seven of the state's 32 dispatch centers were identified as consolidation candidates in the 2025 report. The board has awarded funding for three consolidations so far:

$65,370 for Sanborn County and the Mitchell Police Department in October 2025.

$237,744 for Miner County and Lake County in October 2025.

$327,121 for Lawrence County and Spearfish this month.

The other centers identified as consolidation candidates are in Spink, Moody, Fall River and Butte counties.

Spearfish and the Lawrence County dispatch center in Deadwood are 15 miles apart in the Black Hills. The two plan to merge by January, with Lawrence County's dispatch center absorbing Spearfish's center and one of its dispatchers. The move will cut two dispatch positions.

Jamie Pesicka Olson, with the Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, told board members the consolidation would ensure Lawrence County residents receive dependable emergency communications.

"It improves coordination and operability and efficiency," Pesicka Olson said.

Michelle DeNeui, a state 911 board member who recused herself from the award decision because she works for Spearfish, said the county is an "oddball" because it had two dispatch centers. Most dispatch centers serve multiple counties.

The grants can help county commissions get past the initial hurdle of short-term consolidation costs, said Jason Husby, the state's 911 coordinator.

"This is where previous consolidations fell: Two agencies wanted to join, they see this initial cost and then they back out of it," Husby said.

Perkins County Sheriff Kelly Serr, who chairs the 911 board and the subcommittee that reviews applications before they come to the board, said the Spearfish-Lawrence County merger would pay for itself within nine years.

The Miner-Lake consolidation should be wrapped up by the end of the year, said April Denholm, director of Lake County 911 Communications. Radio equipment and software still need to be installed and tested. The grant primarily covered those costs.

Consolidation makes sense for smaller, rural counties, Denholm said. While the average Miner County resident likely won't notice much change, it can mean faster response times and cost savings for the county.

"With Miner being a much less populated county, running a full-time dispatch center is a drain. Running

a dispatch center is a drain for any county, but making sure you have someone there 24/7 is more difficult with a smaller county," Denholm said.

Before the Miner-Lake consolidation, Miner County Dispatch had also covered Sanborn County's emergency calls. Denholm said her center couldn't absorb Sanborn's needs, which is why Sanborn merged with the Mitchell Police Department dispatch.

Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and Buffalo County dispatch centers, in central South Dakota, are working to merge with the Winner Police Department dispatch, according to the Department of Public Safety. The board has not yet received a funding request for that consolidation.

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.

Flood of poll watchers, observers, monitors to descend on midterm voters

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN

WASHINGTON — Political party poll watchers are showing up more and more, usually outside polling places.

They have a different mission than the nonpartisan election observers long regarded as bulwarks of credibility, and there's concern that voters will be confused who's there to influence them and who's there to protect them.

The growing presence of partisans creates the possibility of even more conflict in the November midterm elections, voting rights advocates worry. They fear confusion between the two groups will contribute to an ongoing breakdown of voter trust in the process.

"This is a polarized country. There is the risk that people will see other poll monitor programs designed for intimidation and lump us all together," said Dan Vicuna, senior policy director for voting and fair representation at Common Cause.

His organization is part of a coalition of voting rights advocates that trains and sends nonpartisan workers to the polls. They ensure voters won't be intimidated and that counting and recounting will proceed properly.

The political parties, which have their own poll watching programs, each maintain the other side is to blame for any confusion.

"The Trump administration has sought to break longstanding norms surrounding observers and monitors," said Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Ala., the House elections subcommittee's top Democrat.

Republicans argue that election integrity has been under assault for years and despite virtually no evidence, they maintain results in key state and presidential races were subject to fraud.

President Donald Trump in his address to the nation on July 16 claimed "evidence shows that the election system we have dangerously exposes and really exposes, like levels never thought possible, to hacking, exploitation, and foreign interference."

The result so far is a Trump-inspired redrawing of congressional lines in some states to favor Republicans, a so-far unsuccessful push to have Congress pass a law requiring voters to provide proof of citizenship and show ID at the polls, and the Supreme Court's weakening of Voting Rights Act protections against poll intimidation.

Many eyes on the process

Poll watching takes many forms, depending on state laws and policies. Poll watchers and workers are often outside the polls, promoting their interests.

Monitors, on the other hand, are trained observers.

Common Cause explains that poll monitors are "people who are assigned to observe the polls on behalf

of a campaign or political party and certified by the election officials – often inside the polling place." In certain states they can challenge voter eligibility

Some poll watchers are stationed outside polling places. "They may be explicitly partisan and for a particular candidate or party. These individuals do not have the right to enter the polling place," Common Cause explains.

Common Cause is part of an Election Protection program that concentrates on helping voters and election officials in areas where turnout could be low or there's concern about voter intimidation.

"The focus of our program is to be nonpartisan problem solvers," said Vicuna. Depending on a state's laws, it can redirect people to the correct polling place.

Monitors, who go through a training program, can make sure a partisan poll worker does not try to overstep their authority or that a voter is not showing up because they fear immigration officials could be present.

Another highly regarded system is the "observer" program Congress approved two years ago by a 413-1 vote in the House and by voice vote in the Senate.

"The purpose of the program is to have House of Representatives staffers, designated and credentialed by the (House Administration) Committee, on-site at the election office or facility in close or difficult elections to observe the election procedures to ensure the certified winner was chosen in a free and fair election," says a House Administration Committee fact sheet.

It stresses "election observers are not campaign staff and may not advocate or represent any candidate or position."

The program has enjoyed broad bipartisan support and won plaudits recently from Rep.Laurel Lee, R-Florida, chair of the House elections subcommittee.

"It promotes transparency, gives election officials another set of eyes on the process, and helps candidates and voters better understand how elections are conducted," she said of the program. "Together, these benefits strengthen public confidence in our elections."

A system that works?

The subcommittee held a hearing on July 15 on poll activities. Despite the fierce battles over voting rights, the hearing was a calm, policy-driven session.

It featured two local election officials, Wesley Wilcox of Marion County, Florida, and Lance Reed of Summit County, Ohio, describing how they strive to avoid any show of partisanship or efforts to influence voters.

Summit County, which includes Akron, is heavily Democratic. Marion County is heavily Republican.

"We have a perfect opportunity to counter many of the false narratives that circulate online. We can educate people about how elections actually work," Wilcox said.

Reed described how officials in his county had a "positive experience" with the congressional program and were unaware of the observers' political opinions.

Sewell expressed a broader concern, that the combination of Republican efforts to dispatch poll watchers, combined with court decisions that have arguably weakened the Voting Rights Act, could lead to more intimidation of minority voters by the GOP.

She asked Reed where he saw the line "between a legitimate election observation and conduct that risks intimidating voters and interfering with or disrupting the work of election officials?" And, she asked, what safeguards could be most effective in preventing observers from promoting partisan views?

"Luckily, we haven't run into any issues along those lines," he said, adding many of the local observers are people election officials know well who have done the job for years.

Suspicious political parties

Beyond the calm congressional talk and nonpartisan Election Protection efforts, the two parties are increasingly suspicious of one another's activity at the polls.

Republicans in 2024 sent poll watchers to many states, part of a massive effort that officials said would assure election integrity.

"Every ballot. Every precinct. Every processing center. Every county. Every battleground state. We will

be there," said Lara Trump, who at the time was a Republican National Committee co-chair. The party sent thousands of volunteers to keep an eye on polls in 18 potential swing states.

Republicans sent congressional observers to Atlanta, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia and Madison, Wisconsin, that year, said Rep. Joe Morelle, D-New York, the House Committee on Administration's top Democrat. He said no congressional Democratic observers were sent.

"Their departure from the long-established norms suggested an unprecedented attempt to use the program for partisan gain," Morelle said. The Republican National Committee has not responded to a request for comment.

Trump praised the GOP's election watch effort and vowed to keep it going this year.

He recalled in a May Truth Social post how "the Republicans had an Election Integrity Army in every single State to preserve the sanctity of each legal vote."

He said, "We will be doing the same again in 2026, but it will be much bigger and stronger. All Americans should have their voices be heard by casting a vote. Be assured this Election will be fair!"

So far, "The RNC's already on the ground, deploying staff in 17 states, registering voters, and aggressively fighting to win in November – and we will not stop until we do," said Chairman Joe Gruters in a May post on X. The states have not been identified.

Democrats are fighting back with their own poll watching programs.

The Democratic National Committee says it is working to "develop comprehensive counter-programming to potential GOP voter intimidation and election subversion."

It plans to do this using "poll observer deployment, constitutional observers, escalation protocols, and coordinated legal and operational support."

The DNC would not provide details.

In addition, Senate Democratic leaders last month announced a new program they said would "train Senate staff to serve as official election observers and protect against any meddling in the 2026 midterm elections."

They said in a statement "Their role will be to observe, document, and report objective information to assist the Senate in addressing any potentially contested Senate elections and to inform future legislation and oversight work related to federal election administration."

Voters seem to agree on one thing. "I guess at the end of the day, public trust is paramount, and public trust right now is on the edge," said Rep. Julie Johnson, D-Texas, an election subcommittee member. "It's the most fragile it has been in our electoral system in quite some time."

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

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 36 of 80

Podcast: South Dakota's journey to a historic runoff election

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Ep. 26: South Dakota's journey to a historic runoff election

WOSTER: One of the things I wondered with the primary was why nobody was hitting Doeden … Especially if it's as tight as it certainly could be, it's going to be hard cause, you know, he's going to hit Rhoden. So it's going to be hard for me that somebody doesn't have something or won't find something stronger than we saw against Doeden in the primary in this runoff, and that he's going to, he's going to get hit harder and more often.

O'BRIEN: We're back with another episode of the Searchlight Report, a podcast from South Dakota Searchlight that brings you up to date on policy and politics in the Mount Rushmore State. I'm your host, Meghan O'Brien.

South Dakota Republicans are days away from choosing their nominee for governor in the first-ever statewide runoff election. None of the four candidates pulled the 35% of votes needed to win June's primary election outright.

You just heard from Kevin Woster, a longtime South Dakota journalist who's written columns for Searchlight and has reported in newsrooms across the state including the Brookings Register, Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Rapid City Journal, KELO-TV and South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

I spoke with him after the June 2 primary election to learn more about the results from that day and what they could mean for Tuesday's runoff election.

The two remaining candidates are current Governor Larry Rhoden and businessman Toby Doeden.

Just this week Rhoden's campaign released an ad using public record and Doeden's own comments to criticize Doeden's voting record.

AUDIO FROM RHODEN CAMPAIGN: Doeden didn't cast a Republican primary vote until 2024. Even worse, Doden voted for Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

DOEDEN: I think I may have even voted for Barack Obama.

If Toby Doden voted for Obama, how can we trust him as governor?

O'BRIEN: Doeden's since said that he didn't vote for former president Barack Obama, and at a recent campaign stop said he's voted for current President Donald Trump three times.

The back and forth criticisms are the newest in a race defined by issues including tax policy, prison reform and political experience.

But how did we get here?

For this week's episode of Searchlight Report, we'll go back through the campaigns of four Republicans to see how two of them who weren't initially seen as frontrunners ended up being the last two candidates standing.

O'BRIEN: In April 2025, state Speaker of the House Jon Hansen was the first to announce his campaign.

Hansen said then that he'd defend property rights against eminent domain claims to build carbon pipelines, stop giving incentives to large corporations and cut government spending.

HANSEN: I'm a conservative Republican. And so I want to conserve those things that make South Dakota great, and for me that's faith and that's family and that's freedom, and that will always be my focus.

O'BRIEN: He's served 11 total years in the state House of Representatives. Hansen is also a co-founder of the anti-abortion group Life Defense Fund, which led a campaign against a constitutional amendment that would have restored abortion rights in the state.

A little more than a month after Hansen announced his campaign, Toby Doeden announced his. He promised then to eliminate property taxes.

Doeden reiterated that promise during a past interview with Searchlight Report.

DOEDEN: I think phasing out and eliminating property tax is going to be something that the folks talk about in this state 100 years from now … I'm going to be the first one here to get it done.

O'BRIEN: State lawmakers spent months in Pierre this past winter working to push through solutions to the rising property tax problem — and those actions would become a major issue in the campaign for governor. Property taxes raise about 2 billion dollars in revenue, and all of that money goes to local governments. None of it goes to the state government.

After Doeden's announcement, U-S Representative Dusty Johnson entered the race. He told supporters then that it's time for a new chapter.

Unlike Doeden, Johnson's not a political newcomer — having previously served under former Governors Mike Rounds and Dennis Daugaard, and as an elected public utilities commissioner. He also previously worked as an executive at Vantage Point Solutions, a telecommunications engineering and consulting firm.

He's currently finishing out his fourth term in the U-S House of Representatives.

Johnson spoke about aligning South Dakota with Trump's vision for the quote golden age of America.

As his campaign moved forward, he became focused on creating what he called a business friendly environment in South Dakota, including a framework for data centers looking to do business in the state.

JOHNSON: What we know is that there's a lot of misinformation around data centers. Clearly, you can have projects that are poorly done. Not every corner is the right corner for a data center, in the right way that not every corner is the right corner for a cemetery or a convenience store, right? I mean, we have to do these things in the right way.

O'BRIEN: Current Governor Larry Rhoden was the last to throw his hat in the ring. He took over as governor last year, after his predecessor Kristi Noem left to lead the national Department of Homeland Security. Before serving as lieutenant governor, Rhoden served 16 years in the state Legislature, including leadership positions such as House majority leader.

He told supporters at his campaign announcement that quote good policy makes good politics.

As governor, he's made many major policy moves. He signed laws using revenue from sales tax increases to reduce homeowner property taxes, a law that bans the use of eminent domain to get land access for carbon capture pipelines and a law to fund the construction of a $650 million men's prison in Sioux Falls.

About half of the existing inmates in South Dakota end up returning to prison within three years of release. Calls for reform have played a major role in the race.

RHODEN: We owe it to society, we owe it to humanity to provide these inmates an opportunity to get a job when they're out of prison and start their lives over and be productive members of society. And that's what we'll do, work toward, especially when we get the new prison up and running.

O'BRIEN: By the end of 2025, the stage was set for a four-candidate race for the Republican nomination for governor.

O'BRIEN: Hansen, Doeden, Johnson and Rhoden hit the campaign trail through the early months of this year.

Three debates asked candidates to explain their positions on property tax policy, criminal justice reform, public safety, data centers and economic development.

Rhoden and Hansen caught criticism for the property tax relief plans they passed into law, which relied on higher sales taxes to reduce homeowner property taxes. Doeden, in his first run for elected office, labeled his opponents 'career politicians. ' Previous votes in Congress from Johnson made some question his support of President Trump.

Johnson led in the first several polls. By April, he was far ahead in polling, with nearly enough support to win and avoid a runoff. Those numbers came from a survey by Mason-Dixon Polling, commissioned by South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy.

By late May, in a KELOLAND-commissioned Emerson College Polling survey, Doeden took his first lead at 26%, followed by Johnson at 23%. The gap between the two fell within the poll's margin of error at 3.2 percentage points.

Johnson fell to third place during June's primary election, getting 23% of the vote. I asked Woster how that happened.

WOSTER: Well, I, and I, I touched on this in something I wrote for you guys at Searchlight, that I think he had bad ads. I just don't think he could ever find an advertisement, a TV advertisement that presented him in a very effective way. He just didn't show very well in those ads, which seemed awkward and kind of stilted and…

And you know, he did a – he's a good public speaker when he gets out and about and I think he was caught in a bad spot kind of between Trump and not being with Trump, which is – Which I'd say, I think his natural inclination, obviously, is to not be a big Trumper, and in a primary election, the votes that he had taken that were seen as going against Trump showed up in some of the attack ads, and they probably had an impact and just a lot of things went wrong with… And usually you have to blame the candidate. You have to blame the candidate and how he manages the campaign and the people that work on his campaign.

So, I assume he's doing some soul searching now about what went wrong, and sometimes somebody that's perceived as the frontrunner early on, you know, that's a long time to hold that, and you can get kind of tense because you've started to assume that you're probably going to finish first. And then when you feel it slipping away, as perhaps he was starting to see some polling numbers in their internal polls that indicated that. I don't know that, but you have to wonder about that. It's, you can kind of tense up, and he was throwing a lot of ads out there, and I'm not sure they were doing much good.

O'BRIEN: Doeden received 31% of the Republican vote in June. Rhoden came in second with 25%. Hansen finished fourth with 21%.

Pat Powers has written the South Dakota War College political blog from a Republican perspective for more than 20 years. He and I spoke after the primary election in June about what he called the fatal error in the race.

O'BRIEN: Yeah, were you expecting to see Doden's numbers get that high?

POWERS: Well, I don't know that anybody did, because, you know, he's a new quantity in the, you know, he's new, and, really has no experience running before, but I — and I think the fatal error in the race was that everybody underestimated his performance and they never really went after him with any criticism.

And if you think about it in that way, it's a lot like the, what people talk about in comparison, the Rounds-Kirby-Barnett race for governor, where Kirby and Barnett went after each other, but they left Mike alone. And then on election day, Mike took the win, you know. And so, with Toby Doeden, just like Mike Rounds, the attacks didn't happen to Toby. So, he kind of benefited from the hall pass.

And, and I know some of the strategy out there for some of the candidates is they, they kind of thought Toby was the person they wanted to be in the runoff against. So, you didn't see any commercials poking at him while everybody else was busy going after each other. And, Doeden took his shots, you know, he leveled attacks at them, you know, the 'Jailhouse Jon Hansen, ' weak on crime attack, that came out of Toby Doeden's camp. You know, and he had other attacks on Dusty and Larry Rhoden.

You know, Dusty had outside groups coming in, and he was kind of stung by votes he's managed to get a pass on from voters before, such as the, you know, his vote for the January 6th investigation, and a vote to reject what was a kind of an atypical funding mechanism for the border wall. It was just kind of outside what was normally done, and they didn't think it was necessarily constitutional. So, you know, he rejected that funding, but voted for it every other time.

Now, keep in mind, since these things he was getting hit with, you know, Trump had endorsed Dusty for Congress since those votes. So, obviously, there was no problem with it. But the outside group, you know, they used those to great effect, to drive Dusty's numbers down. And so, everybody is out there being defined, you know, the hits against Rhoden, the hits against Jon Hansen, the hits against Dusty, they were being defined.

So, and, at the same time, nobody was defining Toby. So, he had complete autonomy to define himself, and you know, his commercials were effective in doing so. I mean, they might have been very practiced and rote, and they, the commercials, didn't deviate from any other speech he's given, but, you know, he got them to sink in, and nobody was taking the bark off him. So, you've got a situation where he's got full

autonomy, and it showed. I mean, he won.

O'BRIEN: None of the candidates reached the threshold of a decades-old state law which requires the winner of a primary election to secure 35% of the vote.

Doeden criticized the runoff rule in a video published on YouTube less than a week after the primary election.

DOEDEN: We should just cancel the 35% rule and just award me the winner. Such a silly rule anyway. They put this in back in the '80s. I don't know who did it, but uh whoever did it should be discredited. Like it, it's ridiculous. You ask the people to vote. Whoever gets the most votes wins.

O'BRIEN: Former state lawmaker Joe Barnett sponsored the 1985 legislation before he died that year. Barnett served nearly two decades in the state Legislature, as a Republican representing the same district Doeden calls home.

The law requires a runoff eight weeks after the primary election, leaving Doeden and Rhoden to continue campaigning.

The runoff election is only open to Republicans. During the three months before the primary election, the Republican Party gained more than 4,000 voters, and between last month's primary and the registration deadline for this election, an additional 5,700 voters joined the Republican Party. More than half of the state's registered voters are Republicans.

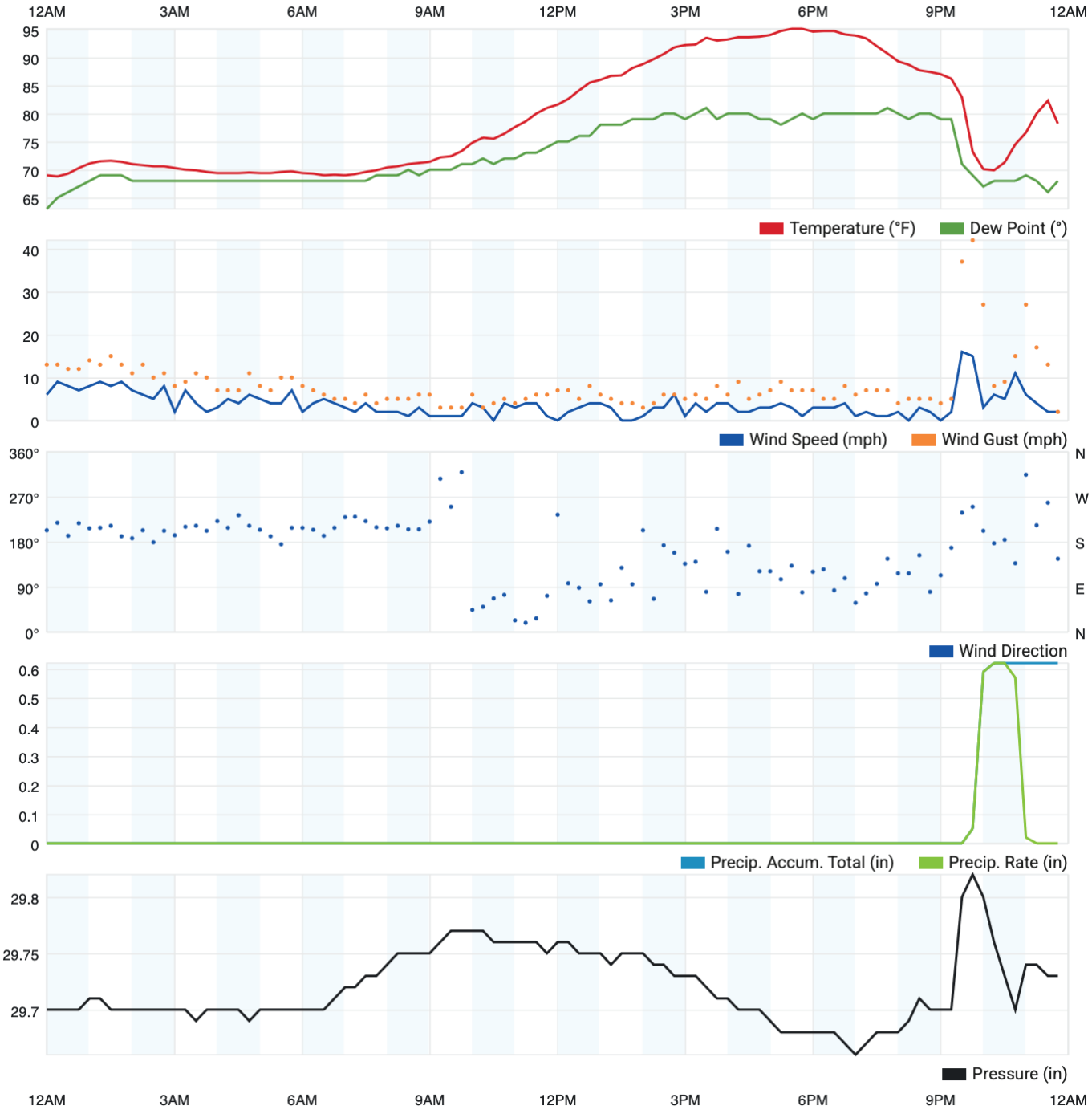
Some of those registrations are people who are coming of age to vote or moving to the state. But some are coming from people who switched party registrations to participate in the runoff election.

The registration deadline for Tuesday's election has passed. Polls are open Tuesday from 7 AM to 7 PM local time. The winner of the runoff will be on the November ballot against Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 40 of 80

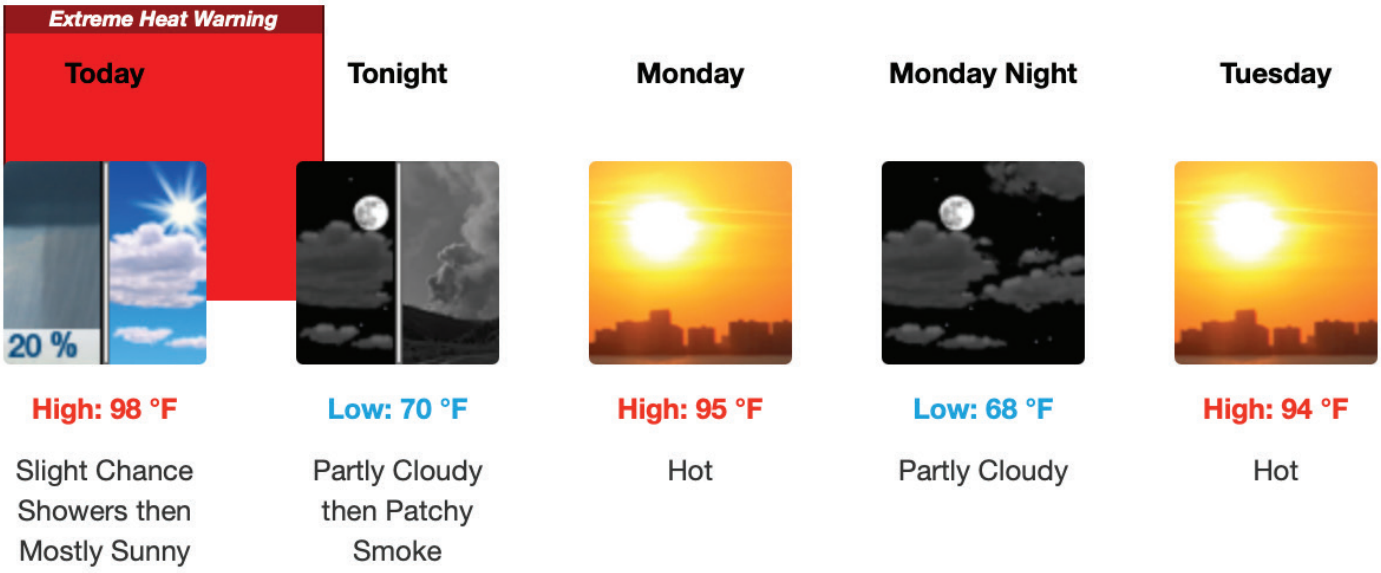
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

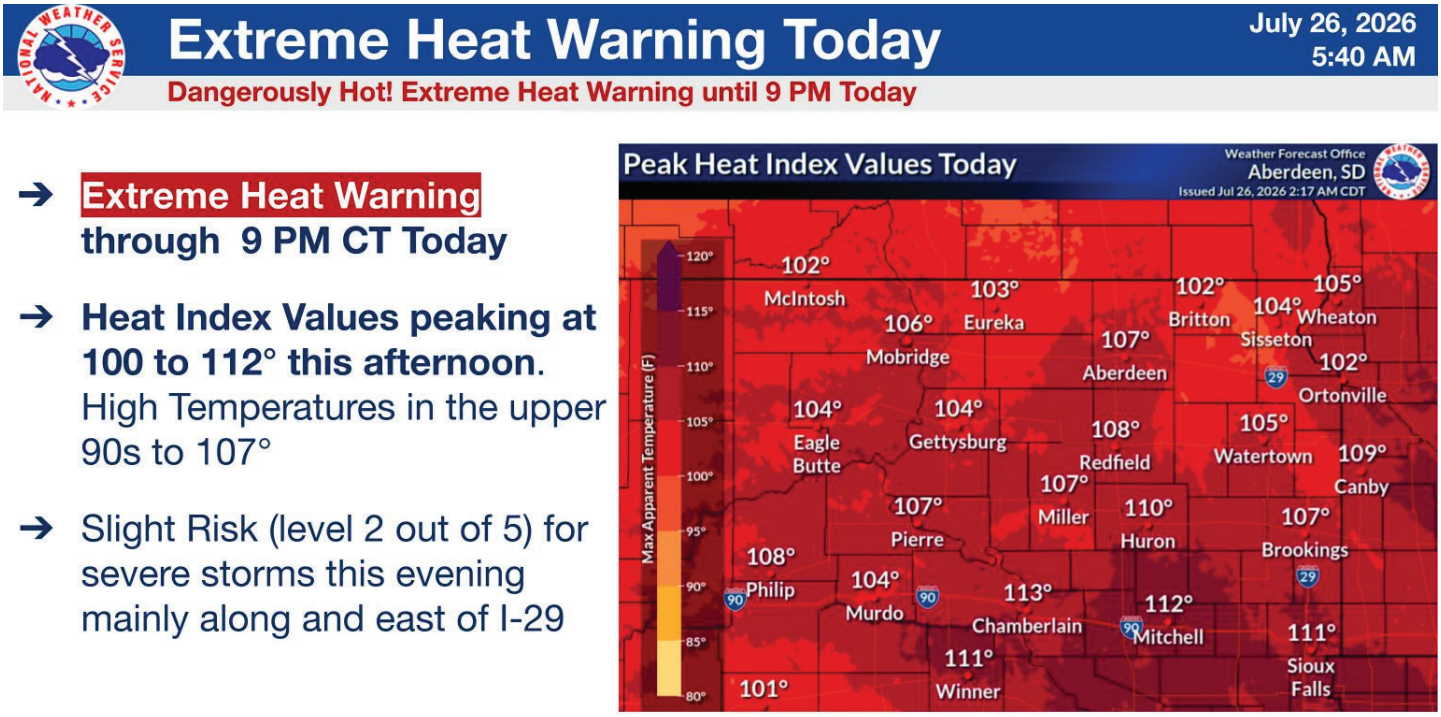
July 25, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

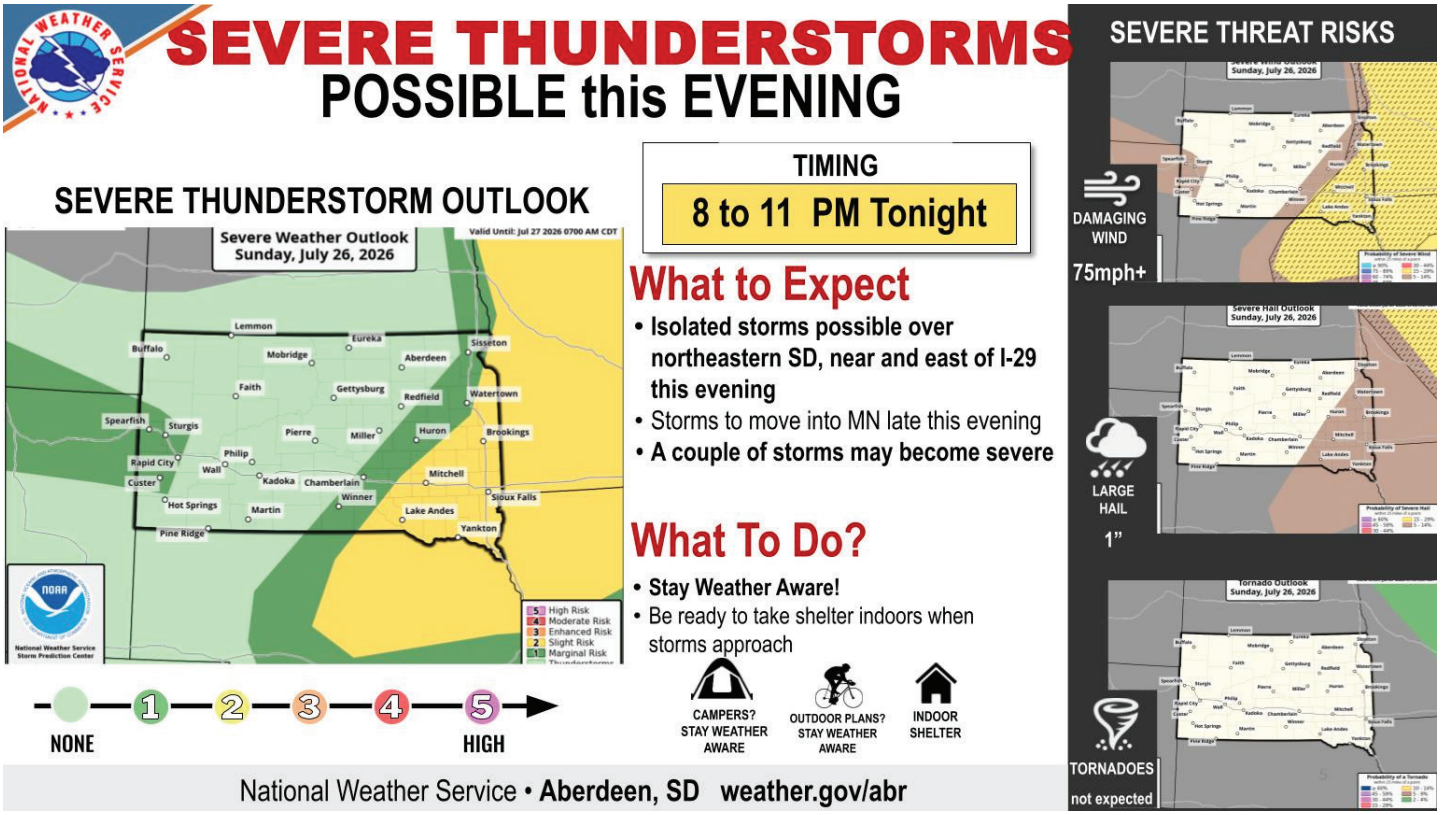
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 41 of 80



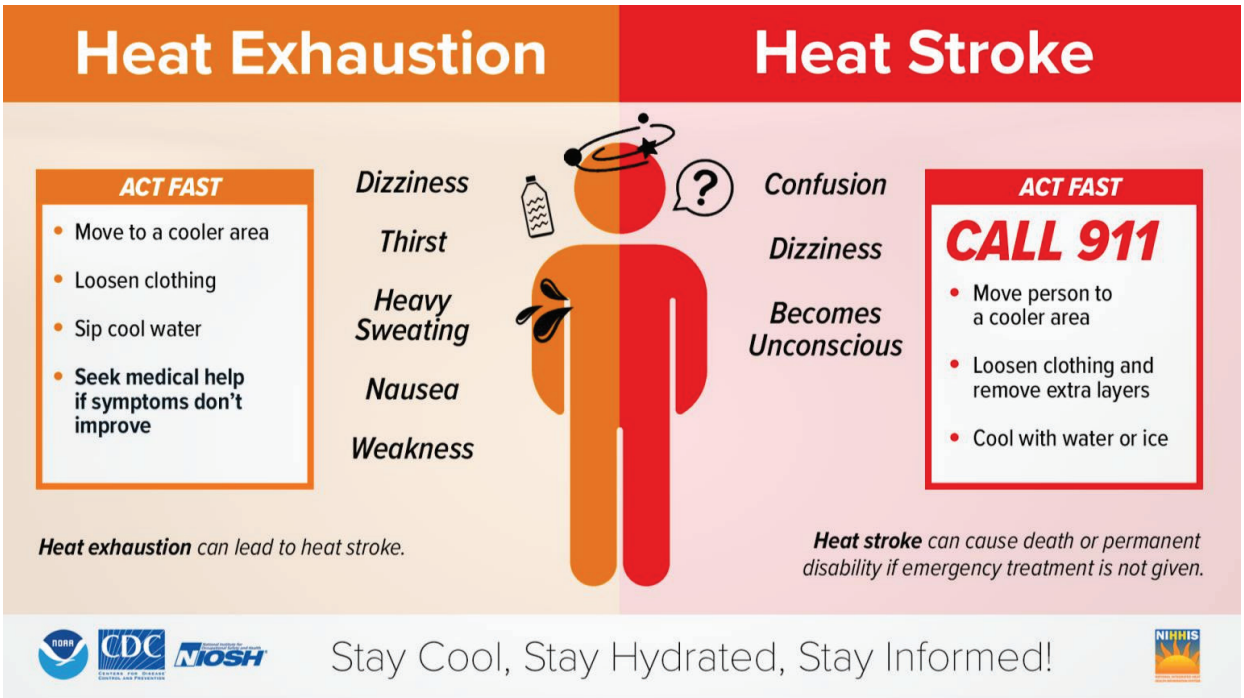


Temperatures will top out in the upper 90s to 107 degrees this afternoon. Confidence is high that these temperatures, combined with dewpoints in the 60s to low 70s, will result in Heat Index values of 100 to 112 degrees this afternoon. Heat will remain across the region, with high temperatures in the 90s through at least Wednesday.

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 42 of 80



There is a Slight Risk (level 2 out of 5) of severe storms this evening mainly near and east of I-29 from 8 to 11 PM. Confidence is moderate to low on where these storms will form, as they may end up farther east into Minnesota. If storms do develop, they will be capable of producing winds over 75 mph and frequent lightning. While strong to damaging winds is the main concern, 1 inch diameter (quarter size) hail will also be possible. Tornadoes are not expected.



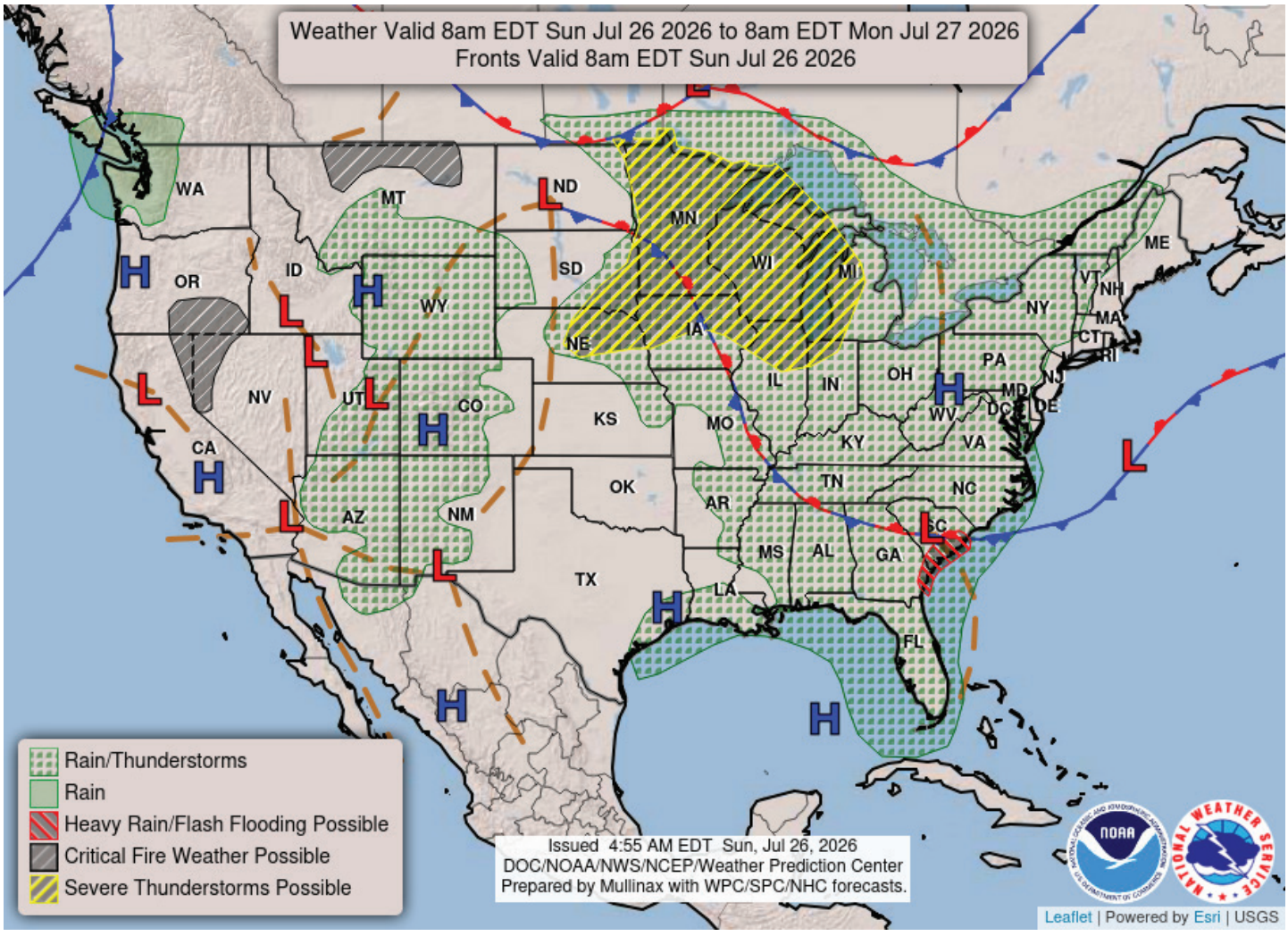
Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 43 of 80

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 88 °F at 6:23 PM
Low Temp: 64 °F at 5:43 AM
Wind: 11 mph at 3:26 PM
Precip: 0.71

Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1931
Record Low: 42 in 1962
Average High: 85
Average High: 85
Average Low: 60
Average Precip in July.: 2.68
Precip to date in July.: 6.13
Average Precip to date: 13.69
Precip Year to Date: 15.60
Sunset Tonight: 9:07 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:10 am



Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 44 of 80

Today in Weather History

July 26, 1963: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast from 4 miles northeast of Raymond. Barns and outbuildings were destroyed on one farm, and the home was unroofed. Asphalt was ripped off a state highway.

1819 — Twin cloudbursts of fifteen inches struck almost simultaneously at Catskill, NY, and Westfield, MA. Flash flooding resulted in enormous erosion. (David Ludlum)

1874: Torrential rainfall brought flash flooding to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Click HERE for more information from the Pittsburg Post-Gazette.

1890: During the morning hours, an estimated F3 tornado went through the southern part of Lawrence, Massachusetts. The tornado left 500 people homeless as the tornado destroyed 35 homes and damaged 60 others.

1897: Jewel, Maryland received 14.75 inches of rain in a 24 hour period. This record is currently the oldest, state rainfall record in the United States. All other state rainfall records are in the 1900s and 2000s.

1921: On the summit of Mt. Wellenkuppe, in Switzerland, the temperature reached 100 degrees by 10 am. The summit had an elevation of 12,830 feet and was covered in snow.

1931: A swarm of grasshoppers descends on crops throughout the American heartland, devastating millions of acres. Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota, already in the midst of a bad drought, suffered tremendously from this disaster.

1943 — Tishomingo, OK, baked in the heat as the mercury soared to 121 degrees, a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1960 — The temperature at Salt Lake City, UT, hit 107 degrees, an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1979: Tropical Storm Claudette stalled over Alvin, Texas, inundating the town with 45 inches of rain in 42 hours. The total included 43 inches in 24 hours, which is the maximum 24-hour rainfall in American history.

1987 — Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced hail two inches in diameter in McHenry County, IL, and wind gusts to 70 mph at Auburn, ME. A wind gust of 90 mph was recorded at Blairstown, NJ, before the anemometer broke. The high winds were associated with a small tornado. The record high of 88 degrees at Beckley, WV, was their sixth in a row. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, and in the south central U.S. Eight cities in the northwestern and north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Salem, OR, hit 103 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Morning thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southeastern Texas, with more than three inches reported at the Widllife Refuge in southwestern Chambers County. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Montana, with wind gusts to 62 mph reported at Helena. Eight cities from Maine to Minnesota reported record high temperatures for the date, including Newark, NJ, with a reading of 99 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 45 of 80

InTouch Ministries

Daily Devotion

How to Handle Burdens

We're not to retreat when pressures build and weigh us down; rather, the Lord instructs us to release them to Him.

Psalms 55:1-23: 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.
2 Give heed to me and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,
3 Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the pressure of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me And in anger they bear a grudge against me.
4 My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
5 Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me.
6 I said, ``Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.
7 ``Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah.
8 ``I would hasten to my place of refuge From the stormy wind and tempest."
9 Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they go around her upon her walls, And iniquity and mischief are in her midst.
11 Destruction is in her midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets.
12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him.
13 But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend;
14 We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng.
15 Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol, For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.
16 As for me, I shall call upon God, And the LORD will save me.
17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.
18 He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me.
19 God will hear and answer them-- Even the one who sits enthroned from of old-- Selah. With whom there is no change, And who do not fear God.
20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has violated his covenant.
21 His speech was smoother than butter, But his heart was war; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.
22 Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.
23 But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.

In today's reading, David is weighed down by external pressures and internal struggles. Burdens come in many forms and often feel very heavy. Every one of us can identify with David's desire to "fly away and be at rest" (v. 6).

Some of the loads we carry are not part of God's plan for us. At times, we lug around guilt that lingers even after confession of sin. Or we carry worry about the future (Matthew 6:34).

Other burdens, however, are simply part of living faithfully in a broken world. We have genuine responsibilities—caring for family, navigating work demands, maintaining relationships—that can feel heavy. And we face relational difficulties that arise not because God orchestrates them but because we are imperfect, living among imperfect people. When such challenges persist without resolution, they can leave us feeling overwhelmed.

But every circumstance in life passes through God's hands before reaching us. He never intends for any of His children to carry a burden without His help. He says to give it to Him (Ps. 55:22) and promises to sustain us.

Casting your cares upon God means releasing them fully into His control (1 Peter 5:7). He'll sustain you with His peace as you trust Him to see you through.

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

Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 46 of 80

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
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 47 of 80

WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.26

17 29 30 33 34 | 1

TOP PRIZE:
$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 53 Mins 49 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.24.26

2 5 42 44 60 | 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$800,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.26

2 6 37 49 52 | 3

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$2,150,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.26

4 8 28 33 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$20,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.26

20 21 26 28 32 | 10

TOP PRIZE:
$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.26

3 4 24 36 47 | 17

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$633,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 48 of 80

News from the AP Associated Press

Pogacar poised to win a record-equaling fifth Tour de France title as race enters final stage

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Tadej Pogacar is poised to win a record-equaling fifth Tour de France title when the showcase race ends with its final stage later on Sunday.

Barring mishap or a crash, the 27-year-old Slovenian star will join Belgian Eddy Merckx, Spaniard Miguel Indurain and Frenchmen Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault as the only men to win five Tours.

He has a big lead of 6 minutes, 26 seconds over Belgian rider Remco Evenepoel and Pogacar's UAE Team Emirates XRG teammate Isaac Del Toro, a 22-year-old Mexican making his Tour debut, is third at nearly 10 minutes behind.

Pogacar's biggest Tour rival has been Jonas Vingegaard, but the two-time Tour champion crashed out of the race last Sunday on stage 15. Both riders had anti-doping tests in the early hours of that morning.

Pogacar had won five stages at this year's race and 26 overall heading into Sunday's 21st stage, an 88.7-kilometer (55-mile) loop around Paris scheduled to start just before 6 p.m. local time.

The stage again featured the hugely popular uphill climb through the Montmartre district, a sharp 1-kilometer dash which riders tackle three times before finishing on the Champs-Élysées.

It has been an incredible year for Pogacar, who has won stage races at the Tour de Suisse and the Tour de Romandie, as well as producing some stunning victories in the one-day classics.

Pogacar won the Giro d'Italia by a huge margin in 2024 but, unlike Vingegaard and Merckx, he has yet to win the Spanish Vuelta to complete the trio of Grand Tour victories.

A US-Russian space crew lands safely in Kazakhstan after an 8-month stint on the ISS

MOSCOW (AP) — A U.S.-Russian space crew landed safely in the steppes of Kazakhstan on Sunday after an eight-month stint on the International Space Station.

NASA astronaut Chris Williams and Russian crewmates Sergei Kud-Sverchkov and Sergei Mikaev touched down in their Soyuz MS-28 that landed smoothly by parachute in a designated area southeast of Dzhezkazgan.

Their 241-day stint on the orbiting outpost was the first space mission for Williams and Mikaev and the second for Kud-Sverchkov.

The crew will be flown by helicopter to Karaganda, where Williams will board a plane to return to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, while Kud-Sverchkov and Mikaev will take a flight to their training base in Star City, just outside Moscow.

Once bitter rivals in the space race during the Cold War, Russia and the U.S. cooperate on the space station and other projects. That relationship was marred by tensions after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, but Washington and Moscow have continued to work together, with U.S. and Russian crews flying to the orbiting outpost on each country's spacecraft.

On July 14, the crew of NASA astronaut Anil Menon and Roscosmos cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina arrived at the International Space Station for an eight-month mission after launching from the Russia-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on July 14.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman attended the launch, the first visit to Baikonur by a NASA chief in eight years.

The newly arrived trio have joined NASA astronauts Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, European Space Agency astronaut Sophie Adenot and Roscosmos cosmonaut Andrei Fedyaev as part of Expedition 75.

Wildfires in France drive 250,000 people from their homes and creep toward wine city of Bordeaux

By MARK CARLSON, EMMA DA SILVA and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LEGE-CAP FERRET, France (AP) — A raging wildfire in southwest France forced the evacuation of 55,000 people overnight Sunday, bringing the total forced out of their homes to 220,000 in one region alone, as flames crept ever closer to the wine region city of Bordeaux. Neighboring Spain oversaw its own fire evacuations on the country's east coast.

Authorities in France's Gironde region, where Bordeaux is located, issued overnight evacuation orders for five more localities southwest of the historic city, as shifting, gusting winds and arid conditions complicated massive efforts to limit the spread of the monster blaze that has burned out of control since midweek.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said that after a "difficult" night for fire crews, "the situation remains very unfavorable."

"The fire again became extremely virulent again and unpredictable, generating its own winds and advancing erratically toward the Bordeaux metropolitan area," Nunez posted on X.

"It became calmer by the end of the night," the minister added.

Fire has burned an area four times the size of Paris

The area that has burned, much of it pine forests and scrubland made tinder-dry by successive heat waves this year, has grown inexorably, expanding by Sunday morning to an estimated 42,000 hectares (162 square miles), the Gironde prefecture said. That is seven times the area of Manhattan island and four times the size of Paris.

Firefighters are battling to slow the flames' progression toward Bordeaux, both on the ground and in the air, with planes dropping water and retardants. Soldiers have been called in to reinforce fire crews' exhausting round-the-clock efforts and other European countries have sent water-dropping planes, helicopters and firefighters.

The number of firefighters mobilized has grown to 2,500, backed up by 18 planes and helicopters, Nunez said. A giant A400M military cargo aircraft that has been converted for firefighting will also be used again, the minister said. On Saturday, it swooped low over arid, fire-threatened woodlands to drop a long plume of ochre-colored retardant.

Bordeaux Mayor Thomas Cazenave described the blaze as being "at the gates of the metropolitan area," about 15 kilometers (9 miles) away at its closest point. The Gironde prefect ordered the partial closure of a major highway heading in and out of the city.

Bordeaux has turned a giant exhibition center into an emergency shelter for evacuees, providing camp beds and food for thousands of people, including hundreds of older people evacuated from care homes.

Cazenave said an evacuation of Bordeaux itself isn't on the cards for the moment. The city is home to 268,000 people.

A second fire burning farther south in the Landes region has also forced the evacuation of 36,000 people this week, driving the total number of displaced people in the southwest to more than 250,000. Nunez said 550 firefighters were still engaged Sunday against that blaze.

Fire crews have also been battling a separate blaze in the Var region of southern France on the Mediterranean. Nearly 3,000 people have been evacuated there.

Tens of thousands of people also forced out of their homes in Spain

In neighboring Spain, authorities oversaw a new round of evacuations due to wildfires in the Valencia region. In total, uncontrolled blazes there and others west of Madrid this week have forced 116,000 people out of their homes.

A wildfire in a bushy ravine in Manises, a suburb of Valencia, that raged out of control for four hours killed one man on Saturday, the local government said, marking Spain's first recorded death in the latest fires.

Earlier this month, 13 people were killed in a fire in southern Spain, the country's deadliest blaze in recent memory.

German police hunt suspect in Berlin Pride van-ramming attack that left 1 dead and 16 injured

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German authorities on Sunday issued a wanted notice for a fugitive suspect in the van ramming near Berlin's Pride festival that left one person dead and injured at least 16 others.

Police and prosecutors asked for help in finding the 21-year-old suspect, whom they identified as Abdul B. They said he is believed to have injured several people with a moving vehicle late Saturday evening, and that one or more people apparently then left that vehicle. Several people were also apparently stabbed, they added.

Sunday's notice warned the public to avoid "direct contact" with the suspect, saying that he may be armed and dangerous.

Police had said earlier that they had identified a suspect who has ties to Islamic groups in the German capital.

"The suspect is known to police. He is known to us as a member of Islamic circles here in Berlin, and our search for this person is proceeding at full speed," police spokesperson Florian Nath said.

Nath added that investigators had no information on "his specific motives."

Police conducted operations in the city as they searched for the suspect. Those included a search at an apartment in Berlin's Schöneberg district in the early hours of Sunday, but police said they found no one there.

Julian Miethig, who had attended the Pride festival nearby, said he wanted to go to an after-party when he heard from a friend that "something bad happened there and there are a lot of fire trucks, a lot of emergency vehicles, ambulances."

"It's a dark day for the community," he said.

According to police, a white van drove into the Tiergarten park around 10 p.m. and hit several people before colliding with a tree. The closing party at the Pride festival, known as Christopher Street Day, was ongoing at the time next to the Brandenburg Gate, a short distance away, following a parade with some 80 trucks that had made its way through downtown Berlin earlier in the day.

Police said a woman was killed. Berlin's fire service said that three people sustained life-threatening injuries, another eight were seriously injured and five had slight injuries.

The Pride event next to the Brandenburg Gate was called off around 10:15 p.m. and a band's performance on stage was interrupted. People were urged to go home and to avoid taking the route through the park.

One of the presenters at the Pride party, Ricarda Hofmann, wrote in an Instagram post that she had been there "not just as a moderator, but as part of a community that comes together to be visible. To celebrate love. To stand up for each other."

She said the attack left her speechless. "What happened today has changed something in me," she wrote.

Hundreds of thousands of people had come to Berlin to celebrate on Saturday, though it's unclear how many were still at the festival by late evening. It's one of Europe's largest LGBTQ+ celebrations.

The van, with its battered front resting against a tree, could still be seen at the scene Sunday morning.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz described what happened as "an attack on our society."

"What an abhorrent act in Berlin," Merz wrote in a post on X. He added that Germany loves freedom, "and we will preserve and defend that."

In the neighboring Netherlands, Amsterdam is hosting World Pride this week and next alongside its own annual Pride celebrations. Mayor Femke Halsema said authorities and organizers "are closely monitoring the security situation" after the Berlin attack.

She said security is always high for such events and extra measures will be added where necessary, "which visitors will hopefully notice as little as possible. Because we don't want to be scared and we want to be able to celebrate freedom and being able to be who you are and love who you want to."

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 51 of 80

A forced-labor crackdown or an end-run around Congress? Dissecting Trump's new tariffs

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Trump administration has imposed double-digit tariffs on more than 60 countries, using a legal justification that permits the president to levy import taxes and other sanctions against countries found to engage in "unjustifiable," "unreasonable" or "discriminatory" trade practices.

The new tariffs announced in recent days take effect just as temporary 10% worldwide tariffs expired, and critics say they are less about cracking down on forced labor than they are a way to replace those tariffs. The expired tariffs were themselves a temporary replacement for worldwide tariffs the Supreme Court struck down in February.

The tariffs were levied on countries that the U.S. says either don't have or don't effectively enforce a forced-labor import ban. The affected countries, which account for 99% of U.S. imports, were quick to protest, calling the Trump administration's claims unfounded and arbitrary, as nations with vastly different records on forced labor received the same tariff level. The U.S. spent four months investigating but gave few details on how it arrived at the tariff rates, which are either 10% or 12.5%.

Sidestepping Congress

The tariffs were levied under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 on countries that the U.S. determined had failed "to impose and effectively enforce a prohibition on the importation of goods produced with forced labor."

During President Donald Trump 's first term, he cited Section 301 to impose sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports amid a dispute over the sharp-elbowed tactics Beijing was using to challenge America's technological dominance. The U.S. is also using 301 powers to counter what it calls unfair Chinese practices in the shipbuilding industry.

"The 301s allow a permanent tariff without going to Congress to settle the dispute," said Barry Appleton, a law professor and co-director of New York Law School's Center for International Law. "That's what all of this is about. The president doesn't want to knock on the front door of Congress, so he's trying every side door and every unlatched window to get in."

Little evidence that countries failed to enforce import bans

The office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) said it consulted with all 60 economies under investigation and held two rounds of public hearings, elicited more than 2,100 public comments, and had "engagement" with its trading partners about what they were doing to combat forced labor bans.

It didn't detail its talks with the countries, saying those were confidential. Experts say it is fairly straightforward to investigate whether a country has a ban or not, but it is difficult to determine the government's exact rationale for each country's failure to enforce import bans.

"There's not a lot of hard evidence there," said Scott Lincicome, vice president for general economics and trade policy at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. "It's pretty laughable on its face to think that a country like the ones in Europe or in Norway or Switzerland aren't doing enough to police forced labor."

And even if countries do enact and enforce the forced-labor import bans the U.S. wants, they would still need to prove that they're enforcing them to Washington's satisfaction before the tariffs would be removed, said lawyer Patrick Childress, a partner at Holland & Knight and a former U.S. trade official.

"This suggests that no short-term path for countrywide relief from the new Section 301 tariffs will be available," he said.

Countries and industries reject the forced labor argument

Many countries have pushed back against the Trump administration's findings.

Brazil, which faces a 12.5% forced-labor tariff, called the U.S. move "arbitrary and unjustified." The U.S. "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," it said in a statement.

Australia also questioned the justification for its 12.5% tariff.

"We believe that amongst all of the countries in the world, Australia does take the issue of slavery, mod-

ern slavery, seriously, and will continue to do that," Trade Minister Don Farrell told reporters in Adelaide.

Carve-outs have riled some industries. The National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO), which describes itself as the voice of the American textile industry, protested a mechanism that exempts the Section 301 tariffs for textile and apparel imports from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia based on those countries' imports of U.S. cotton and textiles.

"No other industry has been more disadvantaged by forced labor than the U.S. textile industry, which employs 453,000 workers and has lost 41 plants over the past two plus years," NCTO chief executive Kim Glas said in a statement. "We remain strongly concerned that USTR's textile mechanism will harm the very domestic manufacturers the administration seeks to help."

US forced-labor bans don't always work

The U.S. has two major pieces of legislation related to forced-labor import bans. The Tariff Act of 1930 gave Customs and Border Protection the authority to seize shipments where forced labor was suspected and to block further imports. But it had a big carve-out: If there was "consumptive demand," meaning there wasn't sufficient supply to meet domestic demand, imports were allowed regardless of how they were produced. The Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act that took effect in 2016 eliminated that loophole.

In 2021, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act was passed. It blocks imports from China's Xinjiang region unless businesses can prove the items were made without forced labor.

But goods made with forced labor can still make it into the U.S. In 2015, an Associated Press investigation found that slave labor was used in the fishing industry in Southeast Asia. The seafood they caught made its way to supermarkets and pet food providers across the U.S.

An investigation by The Associated Press in 2020 into the $65 billion palm oil industry found labor abuses among an invisible workforce consisting of millions of men, women and children in Asia. The fruit they harvested made its way into the supply chains of major companies, including Unilever, L'Oreal, Nestle and Procter & Gamble.

Calls for a more comprehensive approach to combat forced labor

During hearings on the tariffs this month, National Retail Federation vice president Jonathan Gold, who was representing the business coalition the Joint Association Forced Labor Working Group at the hearing, said that in order for the import bans to work, they would have to be much more extensive.

He said there need to be "clear, measurable benchmarks" tied to tariffs for countries to hit, and that the U.S. should help countries build enforcement programs.

Kenya Davis, a partner at the Boies Schiller Flexner law firm, said an effective ban needs a "comprehensive approach" that provides transparency about what the investigations consisted of, along with programs that provide countries aid in enforcing bans.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries kicks off 100 days till midterms with affordability agenda

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

The stage is in battleground Pennsylvania. The stakes are control of the House.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries on Sunday will unveil the party's Fighting for an Affordable America agenda, as he kicks off 100 days until the midterm elections and works to focus voter attention ahead of November.

In Pennsylvania's 7th District, tucked in the Lehigh Valley, Jeffries and Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, a potential 2028 Democratic presidential candidate, are rallying support for Bob Brooks, a retired firefighter trying to unseat the incumbent Republican congressman as Democrats reach for the House majority.

Jeffries, D-N.Y., said the goal is "making clear to the American people that we're focused on lowering the cost of groceries and gas and housing, we're committed to a country that provides affordable heath care for every American."

Down the road, Brooks' rival, freshman GOP Rep. Ryan Mackenzie, is launching his own 100-day out event.

It's a symbolic start to a campaign season that's been well underway for much of a tumultuous year that's included partisan redistricting battles, contentious primaries in both parties and weighty Supreme Court rulings on campaign finance.

Midterm elections are often a referendum on the president

Midterm elections are often a referendum on the party in power, and the contests are set against the second term of President Donald Trump, whose military action against Iran and economic policies backed by the Republican majority in Congress are reshaping the political landscape.

"We gotta win the midterms," Trump said during a visit last month to a Mack Truck plant in the district, where he promoted Mackenzie's candidacy.

Trump has made a number of visits to competitive states as GOP candidates rely on the power of the presidency to propel their campaigns. Last week he was in Georgia, a key state with a marquee Senate race, and he has a trip to battleground Michigan coming up.

While the president voices support for rank-and-file Republicans during his rallies, he also devotes much of his time on stage to a wide range of issues including the U.S.-Mexico border, opposing transgender rights and criticizing judges.

Republicans are hoping the president's signature legislation, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of tax breaks and spending cuts, along with a measure the House passed recently aiming to limit lawmaker stock trading, will buoy them with voters.

But they're up against a historical trend that sees the president's party lose seats in midterm elections and confronting the unpopularity of the war with Iran.

Democrats are aiming to seize on voter disapproval of the war and refocus attention back to kitchen table issues like higher costs and gas prices to propel them to wins in the narrowly divided House.

A few seats will determine control of the House

Even though 435 House seats are being contested this fall, control of the House is often determined by just a handful of competitive districts. Fewer than 20 seats are among the most watched, what analysts call genuine toss-ups.

Pennsylvania's 7th District is a key battleground along with contests elsewhere in the state, reflecting significant political weight not just as a presidential swing state but as the pathway to a House majority. Democrats are also targeting House contests in Pennsylvania's 1st, 8th and 10th districts — all seats controlled by Republicans.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., is preparing to embark on his own cross-country trip to fund-raise for the GOP and stump for Republican candidates as he works to retain his majority.

Republicans have a cash edge over Democrats in the race for House control. A question hovering over the election is how the Supreme Court's June ruling affecting campaign finance could play out, with national parties now able to make direct contributions to candidate campaigns.

Hurricane Genevieve moves through the Pacific off Mexico, but no direct threat to land is forecast

MIAMI (AP) — Tropical Storm Genevieve has strengthened into a hurricane in the Pacific Ocean southwest of Mexico. It is forecast to pick up even more steam and become a major hurricane in the coming days but stay well out to sea on a course roughly parallel to the shore.

Genevieve had maximum sustained winds of 90 mph (150 kph), making it a Category 1 hurricane, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. A major hurricane is Category 3 or higher.

Genevieve's center was located about 500 miles (810 kilometers) south-southwest of Manzanillo, and it was headed west-northwest at 17 mph (28 kph).

No coastal watches or warnings were in effect, but the hurricane center said swells from the storm — likely causing "life-threatening surf and rip current conditions" — were affecting parts of Mexico's southwestern coast on the weekend and would likely hit southern parts of the Baja California Peninsula on Sunday night

or Monday.

Farther west in the Pacific, meanwhile, Hurricane Fausto weakened to a Category 1 storm as it continued on a projected path in the general direction of the Hawaiian Islands.

Forecasters said it was expected to be downgraded to a tropical storm in the coming days, but warned that it could still generate dangerous surf and said "interests in the Hawaiian Islands should monitor" its progress.

Fausto had maximum sustained winds of 90 mph (150 kph); was located about 995 miles (1,600 kilometers) east of Hilo; and was moving west at 13 mph (20 kph).

UNESCO adds France's D-Day landing beaches, Greece's Mount Olympus to World Heritage List

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — World War II's D-Day landing beaches in northern France and the iconic Mount Olympus in Greece were among the sites added to the World Heritage List on Sunday at a U.N. committee meeting in South Korea reviewing dozens of nominations.

The UNESCO committee, which meets in Busan through Wednesday, also inscribed the ancient Japanese capitals of Asuka and Fujiwara and South Sudan's Boma-Badingilo Migratory Landscape, host to one of the world's largest land mammal migrations and the country's first addition to the World Heritage List.

The French designation covers the five Normandy landing beaches — Omaha, Utah, Sword, Gold and Juno — where more than 150,000 Allied troops came ashore on June 6, 1944, along with the Pointe du Hoc assault site, all central to the campaign to liberate Western Europe from Nazi occupation during World War II.

International Council on Monuments and Sites, which evaluates submissions to the heritage committee, said the sites contain extensive remnants, from German fortifications and bomb-scarred landscapes to Allied harbor structures and sunken vessels, marking an "event widely perceived as having enabled the return of freedom and heralded a lasting peace on the European continent."

ICOMOS also called for stronger monitoring and preservation efforts on the sites, citing potential threats posed by tourism, climate change and rising sea levels, and the development of wind farms near the areas.

Ahlem Gharbi, France's permanent delegate to UNESCO, said the Normandy landings marked a turning point from global conflict toward a postwar order built on peace and security, and that the designation of the sites carries added significance at a time of escalating international crises and wars.

"It's probably the greatest amphibious landing there's ever been. It ought to be remembered for that alone," historian David Edgerton said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

The World Heritage inscription of Mount Olympus, the mythical home of the 12 Olympian gods, rewarded a 12-year effort by Greece to secure recognition for its tallest mountain as a mixed cultural and natural heritage site. Rising 2,918 meters (9,573 feet) from a base near sea level, the mountain was believed to be the throne of Zeus, king of the gods, while also harboring rich biodiversity.

Evangelos Geroliolios, mayor of Dion-Olympus, a municipality at the foot of the mountain, said in a recent interview with the AP that inclusion on the World Heritage List "places greater obligations on our part to protect this environment," citing the potential impact of increased tourism.

"We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to safeguarding Mount Olympus for the benefit of present and future generations," said Georgios Koumoutsakos, Greece's delegate to UNESCO. "As Greek mythology wisely reminds us, it is always best to remain on good terms with gods."

The designated Japanese locations in the western prefecture of Nara cover 19 archaeological sites from the 6th- to 8th-century capitals of Asuka and Fujiwara, where Japan established its first centralized state modeled after Chinese systems. The sites preserve the largely buried remains of royal palaces, government offices, Buddhist temples and tombs from capitals that influenced the later capitals of Nara and Kyoto.

Japanese Vice Culture Minister Shigeki Kobayashi thanked the committee for inscribing the Asuka-Fujiwara sites and said Japan reaffirms its commitment to "transmitting this valuable property to the future gen-

erations." Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, a Nara native, wrote on X that she hopes the World Heritage designation will boost tourism to the site.

Yoshiyuki Aihara, a Nara University archaeology professor, told AP the sites are significant because they show how Japan's ancient state was formed through influences from China and the Korean Peninsula.

"If you dig underneath these rice paddies about 1 meter, you start finding a stretch of ruins in this area, though that's not easy for ordinary visitors to understand," said Aihara, who is continuing excavation work at the site.

South Sudan's Boma-Badingilo site encompasses vast wetlands, flood plains and savannas shaped by seasonal rainfall and flood dynamics, with an estimated 6 million white-eared kob, tiang and Mongalla gazelles moving across the landscape in response to changing environmental conditions.

It also provides habitat for elephants, lions, cheetahs and other wildlife while supporting various ethnic communities that have lived by herding, farming and fishing for centuries, according to UNESCO.

Typhoon Noul weakens after making landfall, brings heavy rain to southern China

HONG KONG (AP) — Typhoon Noul weakened to a tropical storm on Sunday as it moved inland after making landfall and bringing winds and heavy rain along the coast of southern China.

Chinese weather authorities expected parts of southern Guangdong and southeastern Fujian provinces to experience heavy rain. More than 801,000 people had been relocated for safety in the Guangdong province as of Sunday, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

In the financial hub of Hong Kong, the city's airport authority said around 350 flights were canceled Sunday and about 2,000 passengers were stranded at the airport over the weekend. At least 21 people were injured across the city during the typhoon period, according to Hong Kong authorities.

China's Ministry of Water Resources upgraded its flood-control emergency response, including for Guangdong province, over high risks of mountain floods, Xinhua reported.

China's National Development and Reform Commission said it allocated 100 million yuan ($14.8 million) to support recovery efforts in the typhoon-hit Guangdong province.

Noul was the third typhoon to hit China and make landfall within a month, after Bavi and Maysak. Chinese state media said Noul is the strongest to make landfall in China so far this year.

Earlier, in the Philippines, at least three people died and many others were displaced due to flooding and rain as Noul moved across, the government's disaster-response agency said. Noul also brought heavy rain to some parts of Taiwan as it passed south of the island without making landfall.

Airstrikes have paused and talks are pressing forward. But can the US and Iran take the off-ramp?

By BEN FINLEY, SAMY MAGDY and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military has paused its airstrikes on Iran after nearly two weeks of intensifying bombing, while diplomatic efforts have pushed forward to try to avert a return to all-out war.

But it remains to be seen whether the U.S. and Iran are at an inflection point in a mercurial conflict that will reach the five-month point Tuesday. President Donald Trump both has threatened more strikes and said talks are pressing on, all while brushing off concerns that rising gas prices tied to the fighting could hurt Republicans in November's midterm elections.

Adding to the uncertainty is the impact of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's planned visit with Trump next week in Washington. Israel, which launched the war alongside the U.S. on Feb. 28, has been notably absent from the renewed American attacks over Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping corridor through which 20% of the world's oil normally flows.

"The Iranians understand that perhaps it could get worse because Israel could come into the conflict," said Michael Singh, managing director at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. On the other hand,

Israel's lack of involvement so far "may signal to the Iranians that we're looking to limit the conflict."

Singh, who was senior Middle East director on the National Security Council during the George W. Bush administration, said he was hesitant to read too much into the lull in fighting.

"If it turns into a multiday pause, that'll be something significant," he said. "But it's hard to know. Is it an operational pause? Is it a pause to allow for some kind of behind-the-scenes diplomacy?"

Mediators keep pressing their diplomatic efforts

A regional official involved in the mediation efforts said that concerted diplomacy was underway and that a pause in U.S. strikes and Iranian counterstrikes on neighboring countries hosting American forces was a "positive signal that helps their efforts to de-escalate."

The official said that both the U.S. and Iran want to return to the interim ceasefire deal and that a compromise, which is being negotiated now, centers around having Iran run vessel transit through the Strait of Hormuz with fewer restrictions on ships. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

On Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, confirmed that Iran and Oman had held several rounds of technical talks about the strait in Iran over the weekend. He said that while the Omani delegation left Tehran on Saturday afternoon, talks had made progress and were continuing.

Iran put a chokehold on the narrow Persian Gulf waterway when the war began by firing on tankers and freighters. In turn, oil prices have soared during the conflict, which has been unpopular with many Americans, and could leave some Republican lawmakers vulnerable in November.

Following the signing of an interim ceasefire deal in June, a battle for control over the strait has erupted. Iran demanded that ships use a route near its coastline and said it can potentially charge fees. Ships were increasingly navigating a southern route along the coast of Oman under a U.S. overwatch operation when Iran attacked some vessels.

The U.S. renewed attacks on Iran's coastal defenses, aiming to blunt Tehran's ability to strike ships in the strait. The Trump administration then expanded its targets, hitting bridges and infrastructure in the south and striking deeper into the center of Iran.

Singh said the strikes appear to be an attempt to push Iran back to the negotiating table. Now, he said, "the question would be: What kind of messages, if any, is the Iranian regime sending through diplomatic channels? Have those messages changed? Do they seem more eager to return to talks?"

Among the challenges the U.S. faces is the fractured leadership in Iran, with different factions vying for control, Singh said, something that Trump administration officials have also pointed to. The people in charge in Iran may worry that compromising with the U.S. will be seen as weakness and could loosen their grip on power.

Whatever the case, both the U.S. and Iran need the strait to reopen for their own economic reasons.

"But they have very different conceptions of under what conditions, under whose control," Singh said. "So we have to get to some kind of stable equilibrium on those questions before you're going to see a longer period of quiet. I think this effort to negotiate with words and also to negotiate with force is going to continue until we reach that equilibrium."

Trump issues threats but also talks up diplomacy

Despite the lull in fighting, tensions are high in the region.

Yemen's Houthi rebels said Saturday that they fired missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia in response to Saudi airstrikes on the strategic Red Sea city of Hodeida. The Iran-backed rebels say they have closed the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which has become even more vital for Saudi oil exports since the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. military also is enforcing its naval blockade of Iranian ports, saying it disabled a Mozambique-flagged ship in the Gulf of Oman on Friday after the vessel tried to violate the blockade and ignored warnings.

Trump also has kept up the threats against Iran even as he spotlighted diplomacy. Asked about his exit strategy Friday, Trump said there are two ways.

"You can just keep doing exactly what we're doing and take them apart piece by piece. We could do it in a more rapid fashion, which we might do," he told reporters in the Oval Office. "Or we can negotiate with them, which we're also doing right now."

While Trump said he doesn't think Iran is "ready yet" to make a deal, he also asserted that "I think they're getting more and more serious as the days go by, for maybe the obvious reason."

Trump met Friday with top national security aides to discuss the situation with Iran and whether the administration should maintain the current course or escalate military attacks, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. No U.S. strikes occurred overnight in Iran after 13 consecutive nights.

Trump insisted Friday that he was "not in a hurry" to wrap things up because of the approaching elections, in which voters, angry about high food and gasoline prices, could vote his Republican Party out of control of Congress.

"Despite what everyone says about the election, I'm not in a hurry," he said. "We have to do it right. Elections take care of themselves."

Former President Juan Orlando Hernández returns to Honduras after arrest warrant suspended

By MARLON GONZÁLEZ and ANNA-CATHERINE BRIGIDA Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Four years after being extradited to the United States for his drug trafficking trial, former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández returns to his country Sunday to face corruption charges that lawyers fear will be a sham process.

Hernández, once considered an ally by the U.S. in the drug war, led Honduras from 2014 to 2022, during which he boasted that he would "shove the drugs right up the noses of the gringos," according to U.S. prosecutors.

His extradition shortly after leaving office marked a rare chance at justice for Hondurans, who feared his hold on the country's justice system would never allow a conviction on Honduran soil.

But the former leader, sentenced to 45 years in prison in the United States, was released in December, to the shock of many in the U.S. and Honduras, after receiving a presidential pardon from U.S. President Donald Trump. He said Hernández did not receive a fair trial and that it was a setup orchestrated by the Biden administration.

Hernández now returns to the country to face corruption charges amid concerns that a weak justice system and his party's return to the presidency will ensure his impunity.

"There is a social majority that is outraged, but doesn't speak out because of fear," said Joaquín Mejía, lawyer and researcher for the human rights organization Reflection, Research and Communication Team. "We're talking about the boss of all drug bosses."

Hernández, 57, faces charges related to a case known as Pandora I, which alleges that a network of former high-ranking officials from 2010 to 2013 participated in the expansion and approval of public funds disbursements totaling more than 288 million lempiras ($10.8 million) to various foundations, according to an investigation by the country's Specialized Prosecutor's Unit Against Corruption Networks, or UFERCO.

According to UFERCO, Hernández benefited from these disbursements, receiving at least 62 million lempiras ($2.3 million) for his political campaign through various schemes, including the creation of shell companies, the use of straw men and fictitious contracts.

Hernández has said he is innocent and that the case "lacks any legal basis."

In June, a judge suspended his arrest warrant and the international red notice issued to Interpol at the request of Hernández's lawyer, although the case is still pending. The former president has agreed to appear before the judge on Aug. 3 for his arraignment.

"The moment has arrived. After four years, I can finally tell you that we will see each other again," Hernández said in a video posted on social media.

Since his release in the U.S., Hernández has expressed his intention to return to Honduras to reunite

with his wife, Ana García, and their children, whose U.S. visas are currently suspended.

Other high-level officials implicated in Pandora I whose cases have been dismissed indicate the likely outcome for Hernández, according to legal experts.

"Everything points to the suspension being the first step," said Mejía. "He'll come, they'll likely issue him alternative measures to imprisonment to keep up appearances, and then he'll end up without any problem, without any sanction."

For Luis Javier Santos, the former head of UFERCO who investigated the case against Hernández, the former leader's return represents a failure to prosecute him for his crimes, rather than a chance for justice.

Santos was removed from his role in UFERCO in February in what he believes demonstrates attempts to stifle anti-corruption investigations by the new government of Nasry Asfura, of Hernández's National Party, which took office in January after gaining Trump's backing during elections.

"We have gone backward to an even worse point than when all the work to fight corruption began," Santos said.

Van slams into crowd at Berlin Pride festival, killing 1 and injuring 16, as police identify suspect

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER and FANNY BRODERSEN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A van slammed into people gathered for Berlin's famed Pride festival on Saturday night, killing one person, injuring at least 16 others and prompting police to call off the celebrations and a concert in the German capital hours after they had begun.

Berlin police said they have identified a suspect who has not been arrested and he has ties to Islamic groups in the German capital.

"The suspect is known to police. He is known to us as a member of Islamic circles here in Berlin, and our search for this person is proceeding at full speed," said police spokesman Florian Nath. He did not identify the suspect by name.

Nath added that "we still have no information whatsoever regarding his specific motives, the exact sequence of events, or his role in the crime itself."

Earlier, police said some of the victims had life-threatening injuries. In a post on X, police called on everyone to leave the site of the event immediately as ambulances and firefighters attended to the victims.

White van hit people in Tiergarten park

According to police, a white van had driven into the Tiergarten park around 10 p.m., which is next to the route that the pride march had passed along earlier, and hit several people before colliding with a tree. Police could not say how many officers had been deployed to the scene but that it was "definitely a lot of police."

Overall, more than 2,200 police officers have been on duty in Berlin since Saturday morning to protect the pride parade and other LGBTQ+ events in the city.

Police were conducting witness interrogations at the park during the night and were investigating accounts that in addition to the crash some victims appeared to have suffered stab wounds — but that it was too early to draw any conclusion from those accounts.

Berlin Mayor Kai Wegner expressed shock, saying that "following a peaceful and vibrant pride parade, the rally for a tolerant and peaceful Berlin was attacked in the most brutal manner."

"This is an attack on our free and cosmopolitan society," Wegner said. "I have confidence in the police and security authorities, who will be working around the clock to investigate."

Meanwhile, authorities called on possible witnesses to come forward and share with police any video or photos they might have taken at the scene of the attack.

The city also activated a crisis hotline for people missing friends or family members.

Hundreds of thousands of people had come to Berlin on Saturday to celebrate at Berlin's pride parade, known in Germany as Christopher Street Day. It's one of Europe's largest LGBTQ+ celebrations.

Iconic pride event called off

The pride event in front of the city's Brandenburg Gate, near Tiergarten, was called off around 10:15 p.m. and a band's performance on stage was interrupted. People were urged to go home and to avoid taking the route through the park.

Before the incident, people had celebrated peacefully, marching through the city for hours, dancing to loud music, and cheering around 80 floats that participated in the parade.

Julian Miethig, who had attended the LGBTQ+ party at the Brandenburg Gate earlier, said he had just wanted to go to an afterparty when he heard from a friend that "something bad happened there and there are a lot of fire trucks, a lot of emergency vehicles, ambulances."

He said he went to Tiergarten and was shocked that something like this could have happened at Berlin's pride celebrations.

"It's a dark day for the community," he said.

Jones and Clark help Team Spoon beat Team Coop 129-122 in the WNBA All-Star Game

By JAY COHEN AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Jonquel Jones, Nneka Ogwumike and Dominique Malonga made WNBA history on Saturday night.

It was quite the All-Star party in the league's 30th season.

Jones had 22 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists, helping Caitlin Clark and Team Spoon outlast Marina Mabrey and Team Coop 129-122 in the WNBA All-Star Game.

Playing with a heavy heart after the death of an aunt, Jones was named MVP. The 32-year-old New York Liberty center became the first player to win the league, WNBA Finals, Commissioner's Cup and All-Star MVP awards.

"No matter what mood I'm in, basketball can pick me back up," Jones said, "and so just leaning into that."

Malonga had a first-half dunk for Team Coop, but Team Spoon had eight players score in double figures in an All-Star Game that featured 127 3-point attempts and very little defense. Allisha Gray had 19 points for Team Spoon, and Clark finished with 17.

It was the first WNBA All-Star Game in Chicago since 2022. This time, the marquee event was played in front of a record crowd of 19,783 at the United Center instead of the smaller Wintrust Arena in downtown Chicago.

"To be able to have tonight, have 19,000 people in the highest attendance ever in the All-Star Game just really shows that our league is growing and people want to be around us and want to be a part of this and understand how special it is," Jones said.

Ogwumike scored 11 points for Team Spoon while passing Maya Moore (119) for the most career points in All-Star Game history.

Kelsey Mitchell had 28 points for Team Coop, and Mabrey scored all of her 23 points during a red-hot first half. The 20-year-old Malonga finished with 12 points and 13 rebounds.

"I got to see a few go down early," said Mabrey, who matched the WNBA scoring record when she had 53 points for Toronto in a win over Los Angeles on June 25. "That's kind of like my thing. Get them up when they're going in."

WNBA greats Cynthia Cooper and Teresa Weatherspoon drafted the All-Star teams from players that were either voted as starters by fans, media and fellow players or chosen as reserves by the league's coaches. Las Vegas' Becky Hammon coached Cooper's team, and Minnesota's Cheryl Reeve was in charge of Weatherspoon's squad.

Clark went 5 for 15 from beyond the arc and had five assists in her return to the All-Star game. The Indiana Fever guard missed last year's event in Indianapolis because of a groin injury.

"Last year really stunk being in our home city, you never want to miss that for the fans," Clark said. "I love to show up and compete."

The 24-year-old Clark came out firing, connecting from 33 feet and 37 feet on her way to 11 points in the first 2 1/2 minutes. She buried another 3 early in the second quarter off a slick no-look pass from Minnesota Lynx guard Olivia Miles, the only rookie selected for the game.

Clark and Mabrey each put on an offensive show, but Malonga got the biggest cheer of the night. The 6-foot-6 center from the Seattle Storm ran down the lane, got a pass from Angel Reese and threw down a right-handed jam with 6:24 left in the first half.

Reese jumped up and down as Malonga finished the play, and the two exchanged a mid-air chest bump on their way back down the court.

"The way she makes it look easy, the excitement around it," said Paige Bueckers, who scored 12 points for Team Coop. "I love Dom ... really happy for her in just how easy she makes it look."

It was the first dunk in a WNBA All-Star Game since Sylvia Fowles in 2022. Lisa Leslie (2005), Jones (2017), Brittney Griner (2019) also have accomplished the feat.

Leslie was on hand for the festivities, along with South Carolina coach and former WNBA guard Dawn Staley. Former NBA star Dwyane Wade also was courtside.

Cheaper, open and intelligent: Chinese AI models gain ground, as they make inroads in the US

By CHAN HO-HIM and MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — China has a hot new product in the United States: artificial intelligence.

San Francisco-based Raffi Krikorian, the chief technology officer at Mozilla, which runs the Firefox browser, switched to Chinese AI startup Moonshot's Kimi K3 for many of his day-to-day activities within days of the new, powerful model's launch more than a week ago.

"It just seems snappier," he said of K3, comparing it to the acclaimed and more expensive Claude Fable chatbot from San Francisco company Anthropic. Earlier, he had been using another high-performing Chinese model, Z.ai's GLM-5.2, for routine tasks such as managing his calendar, documents and email.

Krikorian is one of a growing number of Americans adopting Chinese AI systems, which are gaining ground around the world because they are more affordable and increasingly efficient. U.S. companies like cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase said they're switching to Chinese AI models to help trim costs.

Their popularity has frustrated some U.S. tech giants, but short of an outright ban, they're likely to continue to appeal to independent software developers in the U.S. and elsewhere.

American-led restrictions block China from accessing some of the world's most advanced technologies including cutting-edge AI chips and U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has warned more sanctions could be coming to protect American intellectual property.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on Wednesday accused Moonshot of using "covert" but not necessarily illegal methods to build K3 off the back of Anthropic's Fable. Some U.S. politicians and AI companies including Anthropic have accused Chinese startups of illicit "distillation" of their models to extract their technologies, a claim that Beijing rejects as "groundless."

China's AI models are cheaper and 'good enough'

The rapid rise of cutting-edge Chinese AI models this year shows the China-U.S. race in AI has moved on from early last year, when Chinese startup DeepSeek shook up the U.S. technology industry and put China on the map with an AI model that performed on par with those in the U.S. but much more cheaply.

The latest AI models launched by startups Z.ai, or Zhipu, in June, and Moonshot in July are nearly as intelligent as the frontier models from OpenAI and Anthropic, experts say. Also in July, China's Alibaba previewed its Qwen3.8 Max AI model. In April, DeepSeek rolled out previews of its latest V4 model, challenging OpenAI's GPT and Google's Gemini.

Those constant advances are bearing fruit. Curt Meinhold, a Greensboro, North Carolina-based technology executive, said he increasingly prefers to use DeepSeek for tasks such as finding business leads or ways to generate sales.

"At the end of the day, most of us, the vast majority of us, 90 plus percent, don't need (Anthropic's) Mythos or Fable," said Meinhold, who founded digital legacy platform LilyList. "Like, we just don't need it, we need something good enough."

Chinese AI models are reaching a "critical stage" for wide adoption, U.S. investment bank Goldman Sachs wrote in a July research report, especially when a surge of global "agentic" AI usage, which requires the AI models to autonomously conduct multistep, complex tasks, is driving higher demand for cost effective AI models.

AI prices are calculated per million tokens for both input and output, so the use of AI "agents" is dramatically compounding cost differences, according to analysts including Alex Colville of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

"The Chinese models, you know, I find them to be pretty close on code and research," said Meinhold. "If I can pay a handful of cents per million output tokens versus 30 bucks or 40 bucks or 50 bucks, then it's good enough."

Moonshot's Kimi K3 leads, but Chinese AI models have limits

Based on data over the past month, the top five most popular models on OpenRouter, a platform that tracks data across AI models, were Chinese.

Estimates from Sensor Tower, a market intelligence firm, showed Kimi had more than 930,000 downloads during the week after K3's July release, an increase of 200% from the week before. In the U.S. it was downloaded around 86,000 times, a 387% jump.

K3 proved so popular that Moonshot had to temporarily suspend new subscriptions after overwhelming demand pushed its capacity close to its limits.

Still, while Chinese models are becoming serious competitors to the U.S., they lag American AI leaders across their overall, full-range capabilities, said Anastasios Angelopoulos, co-founder and CEO of Arena, a platform for evaluating AI systems.

And U.S. AI firms are also looking for more options to reduce pricing, such as with cheaper alternatives of competitive models, added Yasir Atalan, with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

US policy could boost Chinese AI models

Most Chinese AI models are open-source — meaning anyone can examine and build on them — at a time when frontier models from U.S. companies like Anthropic and OpenAI are closed-source.

Chinese model vendors are expected to leverage open-source software to promote their global usage and adoption, said Lian Jye Su, of the technology research and advisory group Omdia.

As Chinese open-source models are increasingly almost as good as closed systems made by leading U.S. companies, said Mozilla's Krikorian, "the open frontier is becoming increasingly Chinese-built." While the U.S. weighs restricting Chinese AI models, a group of American tech firms including Microsoft, Meta and Nvidia signed an open letter published Friday backing "open" AI models.

Other U.S. tech policies also at times give China an upper hand, some experts say. China's Z.ai released its GLM-5.2 model in mid-June, not long after the Trump administration put export controls on Anthropic's Fable and Mythos models, keeping them offline for more than two weeks.

"Restricting an American model can immediately create an opening for a Chinese competitor," said Arena's Angelopoulos.

Chinese AI models look to expand globally

In China, people and businesses have rapidly embraced AI technologies that have prospered with state support. Chinese tech companies like Huawei and Tencent are also embedding AI in devices such as smartphones, AI glasses and humanoid robots.

Now China is increasingly looking to dominate AI abroad, too. At a flagship technology summit in Shanghai, Chinese President Xi Jinping championed open-source AI models and the importance of promoting greater global equity, while pledging Chinese involvement in raising AI capabilities especially in developing nations.

As is true for many other industries in China, intense competition at home is driving companies to expand globally. Leading Chinese AI startups are now raising more funding to support that effort, including

through public share offerings.

Both China and the U.S. will want to "encourage widespread adoption of their AI ecosystems, while safeguarding technologies that could materially strengthen strategic rivals," said Chelsey Tam, with investment research firm Morningstar.

"The competition is no longer simply the United States against China; the Chinese labs are also putting a lot of pressure on one another," Angelopoulos said.

But as is the case in the U.S., huge investments in AI have also raised concerns over sustainability of these Chinese startups. Z.ai, for example, reported its revenue surged 132% to 724 million yuan ($107 million) last year, but net loss jumped 60% to 4.7 billion yuan ($694 million).

For now, Chinese AI models will likely continue to march ahead including in the U.S. "I would highly recommend anyone doing any serious AI load to at least evaluate it," said Krikorian.

Comic-Con 2026: David Jonsson is new Black Panther, Ryan Gosling joins Marvel as Ghost Rider

By LESLIE AMBRIZ Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Marvel Studios used its Comic-Con International presentation Saturday to announce David Jonsson as the new Black Panther — the son of Chadwick Boseman's T'Challa — and reveal that Ryan Gosling will be playing Ghost Rider, both in films set for release in 2028.

Jonsson joined Oscar-winning "Black Panther" franchise director Ryan Coogler on stage alongside Letitia Wright and Winston Duke, holding his hand to his chest and smiling broadly. "Black Panther III" is set for release Dec. 15, 2028.

"Thank you to this family that I have the honor and the blessing to join. I don't want to say too much, because I want to let the screen do the talking," said the 32-year-old actor, known for roles in "Industry," "The Long Walk" and "Alien: Romulus."

Boseman died in 2020, and ever since 2022's "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" revealed that T'Challa had a son, fans have been playing a guessing game of who might take over the mantle, with Damson Idris and Wright in the mix. The original 2018 "Black Panther" became the first superhero film to earn a best picture Oscar nomination and made more than $1.3 billion worldwide, while the sequel earned $850 million.

Ryan Gosling rides into the MCU

Gosling will re-team with his "Star Wars: Starfighter" director Shawn Levy on "Ghost Rider."

"I'm having the greatest flashback vibes being here," said Levy in reference to his appearance at Hall H two years ago to promote "Deadpool & Wolverine," which became a massive hit. "I'll never forget that night because it was also my real introduction to the greatest fans anywhere."

Gosling greeted Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige and told the crowd that he'd wanted to play the character for a long time.

Gosling's longtime partner, Eva Mendes, starred alongside Nicolas Cage in Cage's original standalone "Ghost Rider" film, released in 2007 — a year before "Iron Man" kicked off Marvel's cinematic universe. A sequel was released by Sony in 2012, and film rights have since reverted to Marvel, but the character hasn't appeared yet in the MCU.

Stars take stage for 'Avengers: Doomsday'

Feige told the crowd that Joe and Anthony Russo's 2019 film "Avengers: Endgame" will be re-released in theaters on Sept. 25 with new footage linking it to the Russos' "Avengers: Doomsday," due out Dec. 18.

A "Doomsday" trailer played during the panel showed that Robert Downey Jr.'s Victor Von Doom will have some past tie to Reed Richards (Pedro Pascal) and Sue Storm (Vanessa Kirby). Storm is seen saying that Doom is a broken person who used to be different: "Everything he loved was taken from him." Later, Richards asks Doom if he's the one responsible for the horrors around them.

Downey Jr. joked on stage that Reed and Doom were "besties." Fans have been curious about the connection between the two after "The Fantastic Four: First Steps" post-credit scene included a clip of Doom sitting in Reed and Storm's living room with their baby.

"Doomsday" stars taking the stage included Wright, Duke, Chris Evans, Hayley Atwell, Simu Liu, Danny Ramirez, Anthony Mackie, James Marsden, Kelsey Grammer, Paul Rudd, Rebecca Romijn, David Harbour, Lewis Pullman and Tenoch Huerta.

Ryan Reynolds appears as gray Deadpool

Clad in a new gray Deadpool costume, Ryan Reynolds crashed the panel from the audience.

"Longtime listener. First time caller," said Reynolds, asking Rudd why Thor was crying in the previous film. Rudd responded "He's a Wrexham fan," in reference to the soccer team that Reynolds co-owns.

"This seems like an awfully expensive way to announce a film. When do you start filming," asked Reynolds.

"It's in the can, bro! Did you bump your head?" said Downey Jr. from the stage.

Many fans waited more than a day to get inside Comic-Con's most-anticipated panel. Marvel Studios hopes it will act as a reset for its brand, which has been diluted by an overabundance of Disney+ series and critics' disappointment in films like last year's "Captain America: Brave New World." Though audience interest in superhero films has waned in recent years, "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" — released by Sony in coordination with Marvel — is set to dominate the summer box office when it's released July 31 and ticket pre-sales have been strong for "Doomsday."

Iran-backed Houthis fire missiles at Saudi Arabia in response to airstrikes in Yemen

By SAMY MAGDY and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels said Saturday that they fired missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia in response to Saudi airstrikes on the strategic Red Sea city of Hodeida, in an escalation over vital shipping routes in the Middle East while the United States and Iran vie for control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, the Houthis' military spokesperson, said in a prerecorded statement that the attack targeted facilities in the Red Sea cities of Yanbu and Jizan that belong to Aramco, the world's largest oil company.

Saudi Arabia's civil defense said alerts sounded multiple times early Saturday in both cities, but the kingdom didn't comment further.

There were no reported strikes overnight in Iran, in an apparent break from nearly two weeks of consecutive nights of U.S. attacks.

Red Sea escalation further threatens global shipping

The Houthis have said they would close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait to Saudi-linked shipping in retaliation for the kingdom's blockade on Yemen and a recent attack on the international airport in Yemen's rebel-held capital, Sanaa.

"Nothing short of ending the aggression and lifting the blockade, otherwise, it's all illusion and mirage," Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Houthi-led Supreme Political Council governing rebel-controlled territories in Yemen, said of what it would take for the Houthis to not blockade the Bab-El-Mandeb.

That strait, 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 quarter of its container traffic, passes through the narrows.

The Houthis targeted two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea this week. In response, Saudi Arabia struck Hodeida, the Saudi-led coalition opposing the rebels said Saturday. The strikes late Friday hit the port and the state-run telecommunications corporation, injuring two people, said Anees al-Asbahi, a spokesperson for the Houthi-run health ministry.

The Saudi-led coalition said it didn't hit the port but struck "legitimate military targets" in Hodeida province that "were linked to threats to commercial vessels in the Red Sea."

Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, called for "diplomacy and dialogue" to solve the Yemen conflict without "military confrontations" in an interview published Saturday by the state-run newspaper called Iran.

Iran condemns Ukrainian attack on commercial vessel

"Iran had a peaceful night," Hossein Kermanpour, a spokesperson for Iran's Health Ministry, posted on X. U.S. Central Command didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Unlike the previous 13 nights, it didn't announce new strikes.

But Iran's foreign ministry condemned what it called a Ukrainian attack Saturday on an Iranian commercial vessel in the Caspian Sea, saying one person was killed and another was hurt and calling it an act of aggression.

In a separate statement, Araghchi said he spoke with European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas about it and that Tehran demanded a response. Ukraine's diplomatic representative to Iran was summoned, Iranian state media reported.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier said on X that Ukraine "achieved very strong results with long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea — including vessels used in military cargo shipments involving Iran."

While efforts at mediation between the U.S. and Iran continue, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to travel to the United States next week and meet with President Donald Trump in Washington on Tuesday, his office said Friday. They last met in Washington in February, weeks before they launched the war.

Over 7,000 people have been killed, including in Lebanon

A tenuous ceasefire that halted major operations for weeks has seemed to unravel this month. The U.S. accused Iran of striking three ships in the Strait of Hormuz and responded by striking dozens of targets in Iran, which retaliated by firing at U.S.-allied Gulf Arab states.

The U.S. military has renewed its blockade of Iran's ports. Iran's Revolutionary Guard has advised residents of neighboring countries to stay away from bases with U.S. troops.

The war has killed more than 3,400 people in Iran, according to its Health Ministry. Eighteen U.S. service members, 24 civilians in Israel and smaller numbers of civilians including foreign workers and mariners have been reportedly killed across the region.

In Lebanon, more than 4,000 people have been killed since Iran-backed Hezbollah militants fired at Israel in support of the Islamic Republic two days after the war began and Israel responded with strikes and ground forces. Thirty-eight Israeli troops have also died.

Oregon fire looms near town as fourth firefighter dies weeks after Colorado blaze

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) — As dry, windy weather fueled a big wildfire near a city in central Oregon, a fourth firefighter died after he and several colleagues last month were overcome by a fast-moving wildfire near the Colorado-Utah border, authorities said Saturday.

Nathan Matthews, 43, of Lincoln, Nebraska, died Friday, the federal Interior Department said in a statement.

Meanwhile, several fierce wildfires in a summer of big ones continued burning across the western U.S.

One of the worst — and the one deemed top priority for firefighting efforts — was just a few miles (5 kilometers) north of Sisters, a central Oregon city of about 3,000 people.

Winds gusting up to 30 mph (50 kph) threatened to push flames into new areas. Firefighters made progress keeping the fire in check, however, and officials were optimistic the city would be in the clear once the worst of the wind died down Sunday.

"It's going to take a while to put it out entirely. But as long as it stops moving, I think that'll get people to relax a little bit," Sisters Mayor Jennifer Letz said.

As of Saturday, the lightning-caused fire had burned about 40 square miles (105 square kilometers) and was 5% contained. About 30 people evacuated from areas north of Sisters were in a shelter at the local high school, with about as many more staying in recreational vehicles parked outside, Letz said.

The city wasn't in any immediate danger, and business was carrying on like usual, Letz said.

"We're not necessarily asking everybody to come to Sisters. But it's safe here," said Letz.

Months of dry weather, a record lack of snow in some areas, hot spells and erratic winds have contributed to the blazes in Oregon, Washington, California, Colorado and elsewhere this summer.

In Canada, 926 fires were burning Saturday, including 82 deemed out of control, according to the Canadian Wildland Fire Information System.

About 300 aircraft and 5,300 people were involved in fighting the fires. They included 133 in northwestern Ontario alone, according to the province's Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services agency.

The biggest in Ontario had covered some 1,200 square miles (3,200 square kilometers).

The U.S. firefighter who died was among a group that had deployed tentlike emergency shelters to try to shield themselves when flames closed in June 27. Three of them died at the scene: Emily Barker, 38; Nick Hutcherson, 27; and Sydney Watson, 26.

They were part of a Helitack crew — a group that gets dropped by helicopter into remote areas to try to squelch new, rapidly expanding fires — that had been deployed in Mesa County, Colorado, west of the city of Grand Junction.

Matthews and another firefighter were taken for medical treatment. The Interior Department declined Saturday to discuss their treatment, Matthews' career or the surviving firefighter's current condition.

Watson, Hutcherson and Barker were honored at a memorial service earlier this month. Memorial arrangements for Matthews weren't yet announced.

France and Spain battle wildfires as more than 250,000 people are forced to flee homes

By MARK CARLSON, EMMA DA SILVA and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LEGE-CAP FERRET, France (AP) — France sent a hulking military cargo plane to dump tons of flame retardants as it battled raging wildfires on Saturday and slashed the final stage of Tour de France to redeploy security personnel to the blazes that forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes.

The latest wildfires in southern Europe this week have displaced more than 250,000 people, including some 70,000 people who were evacuated in central Spain. One man died in Manises, the municipality reported on its Facebook page, the first death so far in the blazes.

In France, the giant A400M transporter swooped in low, its long plume of ochre-colored retardant trailing over drought-hit woodlands in the southwest as fire crews on the ground fought flames that authorities feared could spread toward the wine region city of Bordeaux.

Race organizers and the Paris police department announced a truncated 21st and final stage on Sunday for the three-week Tour, France's most famous annual sporting event, reflecting the immense strain that two large fires in the southwest are causing for emergency services.

Tour riders will race Sunday inside Paris, rather than starting from Thoiry, west of the capital, on a circuit of 89 kilometers (55 miles) — down by a third from the 133-kilometer (82.5-mile) route that had been planned. Part of the race's security detail will instead "reinforce the response efforts in the areas affected by the wildfires," according to the statement announcing the "exceptional measures made necessary by the situation."

Shifting winds raise concerns for Bordeaux

With winds expected to shift in a west-to-east direction on Saturday afternoon, potentially driving flames closer to Bordeaux, fire crews and authorities were digging trenches, using retardants and taking other blaze-blocking steps, French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said, predicting a "long and very difficult" battle.

He said the fire was about 30 kilometers (20 miles) west of the city and lost some of its intensity overnight. The prefect of the Gironde region that includes Bordeaux said the blaze grew into "a firestorm" on Friday after igniting earlier this week and cautioned that it "remains dangerous" even though firefighters were making progress.

The government mobilized soldiers to join fire crews and was rushing in 1.5 million face masks to protect against choking smoke.

Authorities ordered people between the fire and Bordeaux to evacuate, including from parts of the city's

western suburbs and other towns and villages.

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu described the fires as unprecedented and said the Gironde blaze became so strong on Friday that it had begun generating its own winds. Firefighting teams were being reinforced with the addition of hundreds of soldiers and breathing masks to filter out potentially noxious smoke particles were being rushed to those exposed, Lecornu said.

In Bordeaux, authorities took in thousands of evacuees, offering them food and shelter in an exhibition center, and the city's mayor said it could be equipped to welcome as many as 10,000 people if that became necessary. The city's airport said it remained open but that its bus and tram services were suspended.

Evacuation orders were sent with special alerts to mobile phones, instructing people to leave, Gironde prefect Sophie Brocas said. She said the fire had destroyed about 140 homes in the region.

The magnitude of the wildfires caught authorities off guard

The French military A400M transport plane, specially converted for fire-fighting, was a heavyweight new tool in the battle. It joined at least 18 other water- and retardant-dropping aircraft and helicopters that Nunez said were deployed in the Gironde region, working in rotation in the smoke-filled skies.

The virulence of the French and Spanish wildfires, fueled by high temperatures and the long-term effects of climate change, caught fire crews and authorities off guard.

Firefighters in Spain said the blazes spread so fast and violently that they could not be tackled head on. In France, some people even fled by boat when flames swept through touristic towns on the Atlantic coast.

"We've never seen anything like this," said Javier Organista, a resident of El Tiemblo, west of Madrid, where fire charred a famed chestnut grove. "When we saw the flames coming into our town, surrounding us, leaving us with practically no way out, all the neighbors joined together to try to stop its advance."

"It's just really sad," he said.

Climate change supercharges fires

Spain deployed 2,600 firefighters, police and other emergency personnel to two blazes west of Madrid, backed by 19 water-dumping aircraft and helicopters.

France deployed 1,400 firefighters to the Gironde fire and hundreds of others to another wildfire further south in the Landes region. Dozens of firefighters suffered injuries, authorities said amid panic scenes with townsfolk fleeing by car and police went door to door to tell people to leave.

Successive heat waves that hit unusually early and hard this year, baking Europe with record-shattering high temperatures, have turned forests and scrublands into tinderboxes.

Fires have burned 130,000 hectares of forest already this year in Spain, up from an annual average of 100,000 hectares over the past decade, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Saturday as he visited a command post west of Madrid.

He said more favorable weather Saturday offered "a window of opportunity" for fire crews to bring the blazes under control. Madrid's regional government said the fires decreased in intensity as winds and temperatures dropped.

The fatality reported on Saturday occurred in Manises, part of the wildfire-affected region of Valencia.

Other European nations were helping, with Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Slovakia, Germany and Switzerland already providing or expected to deploy water-dumping planes and helicopters to the Spanish and French fire fronts.

Jetting off for a summer vacation? How to eat and drink to minimize jet lag

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

Jet lag threatens to turn even a dream vacation into a slog.

And with peak travel season underway, millions of people may have to contend with this disorienting condition, which can cause sleep disturbances, daytime tiredness, headaches and nasty gastrointestinal symptoms.

But you can minimize the effects of jet lag — and not just by adjusting your sleep-wake schedule. What

and how you eat and drink can make a difference too.

Jet lag occurs when your body's biological clock is out of sync with the time zone you find yourself in. Usually, environmental cues such as sunrises and sunsets help set your internal clock. But when you cross time zones, it may take a few days for your body to adjust.

"I've personally experienced pretty severe jet lag before," during two European trips, said Tara Schmidt, a registered dietitian at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "It really kind of ruined the first few days of my vacation."

Eat on the local schedule at your destination

While symptoms of jet lag vary, digestive problems such as bloating, constipation or diarrhea are not uncommon, said Joanne Slavin, a nutrition expert at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

One way to minimize jet lag is to begin gradually shifting the timing of your meals as you get ready for travel. Schmidt suggested first moving them by 15 minutes, then a half hour, then an hour closer to the destination time zone.

Then, after you get where you're going, eat when the locals eat.

If it's morning, have breakfast. A hearty one aligned with your new time zone can help you recover from jet lag, a 2023 study co-authored by Northwestern University researchers suggests.

As the day goes on, keep to the same schedule, having lunch and dinner at times appropriate for the location.

"Immediately go on your new schedule," Slavin said.

To avoid stomachaches, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises keeping meals smaller just before and during travel. Schmidt said this is particularly important in the early days of a trip.

"Smaller meals tend to be more easily tolerated for people, especially if you have a sensitive stomach or maybe are dealing with some of those GI discomforts," Schmidt said.

Later in the trip, she said, you may be able to ease into eating more at one sitting. Just be mindful about foods that you might not be used to, especially greasy or high-fat items.

"Enjoying a meal abroad is so fun, especially when you're experiencing a new culture, a new food," she said.

Watch what you drink on vacation

It's also best to skip that glass of wine or pint of beer.

"As fun as it is sometimes when we travel, we really do endorse avoiding alcohol because alcohol is such a huge sleep disruptor," Schmidt said.

Another pro tip: Use caffeine strategically. If you normally have a cup of coffee or tea in the morning, it's fine to do that while traveling. But don't have caffeine so late in the day that it will keep you up. And be aware that both caffeine and alcohol can make you more dehydrated.

"Dehydration can certainly worsen fatigue and those perceived jet lag symptoms," Schmidt said.

Drink water before, during and after your flight to combat the effects of dry cabin air. At your destination, eight glasses of water a day is a good, easy-to-remember goal, but keep in mind that some people may need more fluids, others less, depending on things like weather and exercise. Cleveland Clinic experts suggest choosing bottled water if you have any questions about water safety.

When the trip is over, get back to your normal schedule

Experts say how and what you consume while traveling is only part of the equation for minimizing jet lag. But these changes complement the better known tips for adjusting your sleep schedule to the new time zone.

When your vacation begins winding down, the advice is much the same for sleep and eating: Ease back into your normal schedule and try to fully resume it at home.

"The sooner you get back to it, to all of your habits," Slavin said, "the better off you're going to be."

Maine Democratic delegates choose Troy Jackson as new nominee

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 68 of 80

to face US Sen. Susan Collins

By PATRICK WHITTLE and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

BANGOR, Maine (AP) — Former state lawmaker and logger Troy Jackson secured the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate in Maine on Saturday and will face longtime GOP Sen. Susan Collins in November in a race that could decide which party controls the chamber.

Jackson replaces Graham Platner, who won the Democratic primary in June but withdrew from the race earlier this month following an allegation of sexual assault that Platner has denied. Maine Democrats met Saturday to choose a new Senate nominee to face Collins.

Support coalesced around Jackson, a former Maine Senate president and fifth-generation logger from rural northern Maine who campaigned alongside Platner during a failed bid for governor and was a favorite among progressives to replace him.

"When the people in power refuse to listen, you have to organize, you have to stand in solidarity, together. And you have to make them listen," Jackson said during a speech at the last-minute nominating convention.

Democrats view Maine as the party's best opportunity to flip a Senate seat this year because it's a competitive race in a state President Donald Trump lost in 2024. But defeating Collins won't be easy. The five-term incumbent holds a fundraising advantage, while Jackson will have less than four months to sell himself to voters.

Republicans immediately launched an ad campaign against Jackson, accusing him of having a volatile temper and linking him to Platner. The Senate Leadership Fund, Republicans' super PAC, said it is committed to spending over $42 million against Jackson.

Collins has described Jackson as a 'Bernie Bro'

Jackson, 58, will need to convince the state's large independent voting bloc that it's time to replace Collins, 73. Republicans have called Jackson too extreme for Maine voters, and Collins said earlier this week that she knows Jackson well and that his positions are "clearly" in line with socialism.

"Troy Jackson will attempt to sell Mainers a multi-trillion dollar bill of goods based on rhetoric that will make everything sound free, but in reality would be paid for by middle and lower income workers," said Collins' campaign spokesperson, Shawn Roderick.

Both Jackson and Collins are from northern Maine, where traditional industries such as potato farming and timber harvesting are vital parts of the economy. Both will make the case over the next few months that they are the right leader to protect those industries, along with lobster fishing and tourism.

Collins noted that Jackson ran U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders' first presidential campaign in Maine, adding "He's a Bernie Bro."

Asked by reporters about that description, Jackson said, "I don't really care. What I am is a guy from northern Maine that's a logger."

He said he would attack Collins on what he described as her record of supporting tax cuts for the wealthy and failing to protect health care.

Jackson needs to scramble to make up a fundraising gulf against the incumbent, who has been raising money for months. Federal filings show she has raised more than $16 million so far. Jackson's campaign this week said he raised more than $1 million since jumping into the Senate race.

Maine is an important piece of Democrats' effort to win the Senate

Democrats have a narrow path to take back the Senate in November and it's highly unlikely they can do it without a win in Maine. In addition, they need victories in competitive races in North Carolina, Alaska and Ohio, and they need to hang on to the seats they already have. That includes open Senate seats in Michigan and Minnesota, where Democratic incumbents are retiring.

Maine's Democratic primary was one of the early contests where progressives took on establishment-backed Democrats. While Platner faced several controversies during his campaign, he easily outlasted Gov. Janet Mills, who was backed by Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer but dropped out before the June 9 primary.

Platner had backing from Sanders as well as Arizona Sen. Ruben Gallego and Massachusetts Sen. Eliza-

beth Warren. That support disintegrated after the sexual assault allegation early this month.

Republicans began making the case Saturday that Jackson is too close to Platner. Jackson is "a Platner apologist, a radical Bernie Bro, and a walking red flag displaying all the warning signs of the early days of the Platner campaign," RNC spokesperson Kristen Cianci said in a statement.

Jackson told reporters Saturday that he has not been in touch with Platner and is building a new movement. He didn't mention Platner from the stage during his two addresses to Democratic delegates on Saturday, but said the campaign was "bigger than any one person."

Jackson overwhelmingly won delegates' support

The Maine Democratic Party scrambled to choose a new nominee after Platner, who sailed to victory in the Democratic primary in June, was accused by a former girlfriend of sexually assaulting her in 2021. Platner denies the allegation, but quit the race after key supporters called on him to withdraw.

Maine law gave the state party authority to choose a replacement and required a new nominee to be named by Monday — 101 days before the Nov. 3 election.

Maine Democrats' never-before-used process of voting on a new nominee involved hundreds of Democratic delegates gathering in Bangor, about 130 miles (209 kilometers) north of Portland. The delegates were elected at county party meetings last weekend, and Jackson scored an easy victory over just one opponent.

He first ran for office as a Republican in 2000 when he sought a seat inside Maine's House of Representatives. He lost, but won two years later when he ran as an independent. He switched to the Democratic Party in 2004, and eventually became the Maine Senate president before leaving the statehouse in 2024.

He came in third while running for governor in this year's Democratic primary, but had the backing of Platner and Our Revolution, the political organization founded by Sanders. Once Platner dropped out on July 10, a flood of former governor candidates — including Jackson — jumped to try to take his place. But by July 19, most had abandoned their bids, with Jackson emerging as the clear favorite.

Jackson received early support from progressives who had backed Platner before he dropped out. Our Revolution initially backed Jackson for governor and Platner for Senate. When Platner left the race, the group rallied behind Jackson.

He has supported progressive positions such as Medicare for All. He also has called for the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, whose presence in Maine has been hotly debated since an agent killed a driver in the state earlier this month.

Jackson acknowledged the disappointment of Platner's supporters and the need to win them over for the general election.

"I agree there are people that are still very frustrated and angry what happened. I understand that," he said to reporters. "All I'm trying to do is explain to them that his campaign was about the issues."

Wisconsin's capital city cancels signature events, grapples with fallout from police shooting

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A police shooting in Wisconsin's progressive capital city this week put the spotlight on persistent and deep racial divisions, prompting cancellations and other changes to popular summertime events as protesters said they were determined to continue public pressure for change in Madison.

Corey Ruiz, who is identified as Black or Latino in Wisconsin court records, was shot and killed by a Madison police officer on Wednesday after a brief scuffle at an intersection in the city's most liberal neighborhood just yards away from a popular 52-year-old food co-op.

It marks the third time since 2012 that Madison police have shot and killed someone in the same neighborhood. The shooting has sparked renewed calls for police reforms and forced the city to once again reckon with calls from the Black community to address racial justice issues.

Pressure from protesters, and sympathy for their cause, has also led to the cancellation or disruption of many of Madison's signature summertime events.

"Our community has spoken loud and clear: this is NOT business as usual," Black activist Clyde Mayberry posted on Facebook on Friday amid a string of cancellations. "Your decisions have helped ensure that this city continues to acknowledge the pain, the loss, and the call for accountability."

Protesters took to the streets hours after the shooting, disrupting a popular Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra outdoor concert at the state Capitol that attracts about 30,000 every week in the summer.

The scene captures a familiar divide in Madison, a city that is more diverse than the state overall but still 70% white. Protesters, many of whom were Black, stood over white concert attendees sitting at tables near the stage that cost as much as $1,800 to rent for the night.

Concert organizers canceled the event.

Threats of a protest on Thursday led the city to postpone the grand opening of a new public market, just a few blocks away from where the shooting occurred. A popular neighborhood festival near the shooting called AtwoodFest, scheduled to begin on Saturday, was also canceled in the face of potential protests.

"Our community and our Marquette neighbors witnessed another horrific officer-involved shooting just blocks from our festival grounds, leaving us in deep pain and justified anger," organizers of the festival wrote. "In acknowledgment of what has happened far too often in our community and our country as a whole, this year's AtwoodFest, themed 'The Heartbeat of the Neighborhood,' is canceled."

And on Saturday, the popular downtown farmers market that attracts about 20,000 people each week around the Capitol building, shut down nearly four hours earlier than usual in solidarity with protesters.

"We mourn with our community," market organizers posted on social media. "And we agree - business cannot proceed as usual."

A handful of protesters showed up at the Capitol as vendors were breaking down their booths at around 10 a.m.

"No one should be thinking this is just another Saturday," said Reba Bergmann, who sat with Lilly Nimmer holding a sign that said "Justice for Corey."

"It's not life as normal," Nimmer said. "We should be more mad. We should stand up for what we believe in."

Charles Alt, 30, supported the decision to close down early.

"It's important to keep focus on the real tragedy, which is that someone got killed," said Alt, who was shopping at the market. "Missing some market time, that's sad, but that's not what's important."

But Rodney Hathaway, who was visiting Madison from Milwaukee, was caught off guard by the market's early closure.

"It's ridiculous," he said. "This is peoples' livelihoods. It's just unfortunate. We have such a short summer season for these people to sell their wares."

Investigations into the shooting continue. Civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who represents the Ruiz family, said on Friday at a new conference in the Capitol that the officer who fired the shots should face criminal charges.

Madison Police Chief John Patterson, who is white, has tried to calm tensions, even allowing protesters to overtake a news conference that he was leading along with the mayor inside the police department's downtown headquarters on Thursday.

Patterson took questions from angry protesters, one of whom held a sign just feet away from the chief that said "corrupt cops deserve to die too." After one protester hurled an insult at Patterson, the chief calmly responded, "I appreciate you being here."

More health workers strike as Ebola cases in Congo near 3,000, including over 1,300 deaths

By PROSPER HERI NGORORA and CONSTANT SAME BAGALWA Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Health workers at an Ebola treatment center in eastern Congo went on strike on Saturday, demanding their pay. The walkout disrupted care for patients in the epicenter of the country's rapidly growing outbreak.

The number of confirmed cases of Ebola in Congo has reached 2,973, including 1,309 deaths, according to government data released on Friday in what authorities say is the fastest-growing outbreak on record.

The Elikya Ebola Treatment Center in Bunia, Ituri province, came to a standstill after doctors, nurses and security staff stopped work.

About a hundred health workers protested outside the treatment center on Saturday. They said the unpaid bonuses were undermining morale and disrupting patient care, and called on Congolese authorities to resolve the backpay so they could resume their work.

"We need to be paid, because in the meantime the disease is spreading at the treatment center," Martin Bolombi, one of the health workers on strike said.

"I've already had five people die who are still inside there. A solution must be found for us," he added.

In a statement issued Friday, staff said they had unanimously voted to strike until "concrete solutions" were found to resolve "two months of unpaid performance bonuses."

The strike comes a day after Congo's Prime Minister Judith Suminwa came to Ituri, touring major treatment hubs, in Rwampara and Mongbwalu, to assess the outbreak response. During her visit in Mongbwalu, she faced urgent demands from healthcare personnel protesting payment issues.

Dr. Adelard Lufungula, operations manager for the Ebola response, said Saturday the payment issue is "being resolved," with workers now paid via mobile money instead of cash, and that the backlog "should be cleared" in the coming days.

Last week, health workers at Bunia General Hospital, the region's largest medical center, had already gone on strike over unpaid salaries. Some told The Associated Press they had not received any payment since they started work at the onset of the outbreak.

The World Health Organization says more than 100 healthcare workers have been infected since the beginning of the outbreak.

The Central African nation has been battling the Ebola outbreak caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus since May 15. A total of 766 patients remain in isolation or in hospitals, while 540 have recovered so far, according to data from Congo's Ministry of Health.

The eastern province of Ituri accounts for nearly 90% of confirmed cases.

The outbreak continues to spread faster than health officials can track despite an expanding response. A key challenge is that patient zero has yet to be identified in the outbreak while displacement from armed conflict and illegal mining in the region have made it difficult to trace thousands who have come in contact with infected individuals.

The response is also hampered by a funding gap, attacks on health centers, an ongoing conflict in eastern Congo and mistrust among local communities.

There is also a lack of approved vaccines or treatments for the Bundibugyo virus, unlike the more common Zaire virus for which there is a vaccine and which was responsible for most of Congo's past 16 outbreaks of the disease.

Enrollment in a highly anticipated study of two possible Ebola treatments recently started in Ituri.

WHO says the global risk of the outbreak spreading outside Central Africa is low, noting that 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.

Scrutiny of WNBA intensifies as mounting discord around the league looms over All-Star festivities

By ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writer

The WNBA has never been bigger.

More people are watching. More are investing. Salaries for many players are higher than ever. But mounting turmoil and discord have been a part of this transformative period that has featured a landmark collective bargaining agreement, league expansion and skyrocketing player recognition.

It seems to have reached a new flashpoint, as discussions about race, gender and sexuality made head-

lines ahead of Saturday's WNBA All-Star Game. Race-driven conversations resurfaced after an incident between Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark and Phoenix Mercury forward Alyssa Thomas, while players continued to voice frustrations with WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert and leadership over what they say is a lack of protection from social media harassment and divisive remarks.

"It is a moment to be celebrated without a doubt," said Ketra Armstrong, sport management professor and director of the Center for Race and Ethnicity in Sport at the University of Michigan. "We want to celebrate what's great. But sometimes, the progress can overshadow, still, where the perils are."

Issues of race, gender and representation have been an undercurrent throughout the league's history. Debates over those issues have grown as women's sports have exploded. And they remain a challenge that shape the WNBA's — and most other pro sports leagues, for that matter — public and online discourse.

"This is what a sports league" is, said David Berri, sports economist and economics professor at Southern Utah University. He cited the NFL's Rooney Rule as an example. "If a sports league is going to get attention, you're going to get attention for these things as well."

Growth has magnified broader cultural debates

Contentious conversations also spread to issues of transgender athletes and harassment.

WNBA veteran Brianna Turner said on social media this week that her former team, the Fever, fired a male employee last season for sexual harassment. Turner, who was with Indiana last season but now plays for Las Vegas, said Indiana players were encouraged not to discuss the firing.

Turner's comments came as she defended transgender athletes days after Indiana forward Sophie Cunningham spoke on transgender athletes competing in women's sports.

"I got a lot of negative feedback about me hating trans. And I'm like, 'I never once said that,'" Cunningham was quoted as saying in a story published by ESPN. "I think that I am here to extend love. But I also think with that love is truth, being honest. And I want to protect young girls in a locker room, or young girls in sport who shouldn't have to go against biological men."

The WNBA's conversations about race were thrust back into the spotlight after Toronto Tempo coach Sandy Brondello was suspended one game for referring to Atlanta Dream forward Angel Reese as a "protected species."

The comment, picked up by the broadcast after Reese drew a foul on Toronto player Nyara Sabally, quickly drew criticism.

Brondello, a former player who has won two WNBA titles, is Australian. The "protected species" phrase is used in Australian sports to express frustration over a lack of calls against a player. However, in the U.S., the phrase suggests that someone isn't human and could be seen as derogatory toward Black people. Brondello later apologized. Reese accepted, saying she appreciated the league's swift action.

"It's a much bigger platform now. Everything that happens is news," Berri said. "There were hard fouls 10 years ago. Nobody paid any attention to that. It ends up being because of the coverage now, everything gets magnified … which is good. I mean, this is what we wanted."

'A lot to celebrate,' but race still matters

Clark has repeatedly attempted to downplay the noise surrounding her, but she has become a springboard for projections far beyond the game itself.

"It's basketball," she said in a recent ESPN interview. "When I walk out of the locker room I shouldn't be fearful of what the conversation is going to be. It's emotionally exhausting. It's draining. It makes your shoulders tense because people don't want to talk about the basketball. They just want to stir it up and make something else."

The WNBA retroactively assessed Thomas a flagrant foul and suspended her one game after the veteran made contact with her fist to Clark's throat in a June 24 matchup.

The play, which Thomas has said was an accident, gained widespread attention and ignited debates over officiating, with coaches, pundits and lawmakers weighing in on whether the league needs to take action about physical play involving Clark.

Thomas, who is Black and in her 12th WNBA season, said after the incident she had received death

threats, part of increased online vitriol players have faced in recent years. Chelsea Gray of the Las Vegas Aces recently posted a message from a man that included a racial slur. And Engelbert this week met with a pair of player committees to discuss what more can be done to protect players from online harassment.

Since she entered the league, Clark and her WNBA peers have become proxies for long-standing American issues — from race, gender and sexual orientation to who receives attention and who doesn't.

"There's a lot to celebrate," Armstrong said, "but race still matters. Race will always matter. It just depends on how we make it matter."

Latest Russian and Ukrainian attacks kill a total of 15 people, officials say

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukrainian attacks on holiday camps on Saturday in the partly Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region have killed 12 people, Moscow-installed officials said, while authorities in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region said a Russian drone strike killed three people there.

The strikes followed a major Russian attack on Friday near Kyiv that killed at least 10 people and wounded around 100 others, part of a relentless cycle of tit-for-tat attacks that dims the potential of reaching a diplomatic end to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of its neighbor.

The exchange comes as Ukraine's successful drome attacks have stalled the Russian army's advances in an expanded campaign by Kyiv inside Russia that has been hitting high-profile targets, causing fuel shortages and piling pressure on Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Four children were among 12 people killed in the attack on the resorts in Zaporizhzhia, Yevgeny Balitsky, the Kremlin-installed regional head, said, adding that 19 others were wounded.

Ukraine did not immediately comment.

Sumy regional head Oleh Hryhorov said on Saturday three people were killed when a large fire broke out after a Russian drone struck a "civilian facility," adding that the victims were drivers for private Ukrainian postal and courier service Nova Poshta.

Russia's defense ministry said it attacked a "storage and launch site" for Ukrainian drones in the Sumy region.

In Zaporizhzhia, in southeastern Ukraine, a Russian drone attack late Friday hit a shopping center, causing a fire that spread over a 500-square-meter area and injuring several people, regional head Ivan Fedorov said.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned in his evening address on Friday that intelligence assessments indicated that Russia was preparing missiles for a large attack, saying there were indications that this could happen in the next 48 hours.

Ukraine keeps targeting oil facilities

A Ukrainian drone attack caused a fire in the grounds of the Tyumen Oil Refinery, in western Siberia, Tyumen regional Gov. Aleksandr Moor said on Saturday.

Writing on X Saturday, Zelenskyy confirmed the hit on the Tyumen plant, along with a logistics facility in Yekaterinburg and a fuel and lubricants warehouse in Rostov-on-Don.

Ukraine's long-range drone technology has evolved during the war, posing a problem for Russia, whose huge land mass is hard to protect fully.

Kyiv's forces have targeted Russian oil facilities, causing fuel shortages and embarrassing President Vladimir Putin.

Zelenskyy to meet Trump in Washington

U.S. President Donald Trump and Zelenskyy plan to meet on Tuesday in Washington, a White House official said on Saturday, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss Trump's schedule before it is announced.

Kyiv did not immediately comment on the meeting, although Zelenskyy said in his Friday address that Kyiv was "preparing for a meeting with the President of the United States and his team."

A memorial service in Washington for the late Sen. Lindsey Graham, one of Kyiv's staunchest support-

ers, is slated for Tuesday.

Romania shoots down second drone in 2 days

Romania's defense ministry said on Saturday its forces had "safely shot down" a drone that breached its airspace in an "unpopulated area" near the Ukrainian border. The drone was "shot down by a Romanian pilot from an F-16 aircraft," President Nicușor Dan said in a post on Facebook.

Saturday's interception came after a drone was shot down around Padina, northeast of the Romanian capital, Bucharest, on Friday.

A series of drone incursions by Russia and Ukraine have hit Romania and other NATO members since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In June, a Ukrainian maritime drone exploded at the Black Sea port of Constanta, while three other sea drones exploded outside the port. No one was hurt.

A Russian drone that was part of an attack on Ukraine in May went astray and struck an apartment building in eastern Romania, injuring two people.

Small businesses file lawsuits against Trump's new sweeping tariffs

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Trump's tariffs are headed to court — again.

Two lawsuits filed by small businesses are challenging Trump's sweeping tariffs announced Thursday that impose double-digit levies on 60 trading partners.

The tariffs, implemented under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 for what the Trump administration says is countries' failure to prevent imports produced by forced labor, cover 99% of U.S. imports. Critics say the goal is less to prevent forced-labor imports and more to replace the worldwide tariffs that Trump imposed last year that were struck down by the Supreme Court in February. They came just as temporary 10% worldwide tariffs — that had also been challenged in court — expired.

Educational toy company Learning Resources, which was part of the tariff lawsuit that won in the Supreme Court, filed a new suit along with several other small businesses in the Court of International Trade on Friday over the current round of tariffs.

The second lawsuit was filed by Burlap and Barrel, a New York-based spice company, and Collective Horology, a watch retailer based in Ventura, California. They are represented by Liberty Justice Center, a libertarian advocacy group.

Both lawsuits argue that the government didn't adequately establish its case against each specific economy or spell how the tariffs will eliminate the specified practice they are being levied for, as required by Section 301.

"Forced labor is morally indefensible, but an important objective does not give the government permission to ignore the law," said Sara Albrecht, chairman and CEO of the Liberty Justice Center. "The administration allowed one global tariff to expire and immediately replaced it with another under a different statute. Changing the statute doesn't change the law."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Experts say it might be tougher to successfully challenge the current round of tariffs than previous rounds. Trump used Section 301 to impose big tariffs on China in his first term, and they survived court challenges.

Unlike the Section 122 levies that expired Friday, "these tariffs will be with us for the long haul," said lawyer Patrick Childress, a partner at Holland & Knight and a former U.S. trade official.

Even if countries enact the precise policies the U.S. wants, he said, they will still need to prove that they're enforcing them to Washington's satisfaction before the tariffs are removed. "This suggests that no short-term path for country-wide relief from the new Section 301 tariffs will be available."

Groton Daily Independent
Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 75 of 80

The ICC looks ahead after the ouster of its chief prosecutor

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Supporters of the International Criminal Court were trying to chart a course forward on Saturday, a day after the global institution was plunged into uncharted territory following the ouster of its chief prosecutor over allegations of sexual misconduct.

A lengthy and bruising process ended swiftly and decisively on Friday, when a large majority of the court's 125 member states voted to remove Karim Khan from his post.

The British barrister was accused of sexual misconduct with a female aide, as outlined by the AP in a series of stories, allegations he has steadfastly denied. According to documents seen by the AP, Khan engaged in a sexual relationship with the woman and tried to prevent her from pursuing her allegations.

Khan's removal comes at a time when the court is already facing daunting challenges, including a campaign by the United States to "dismantle" the ICC, which was established to prosecute people responsible for humanity's worst crimes.

Supporters of the court are looking forward

Several countries where the ICC has open investigations met together on the sidelines of the event on Friday to discuss the ways out of any potential impasses created by Khan's removal, according to three senior diplomatic officials familiar with the discussions.

One of the officials said a number of states began planning for how to move forward before the final votes were tallied.

"Whether Khan is removed or not, we must bring everyone back together," the official said. They all spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record.

The vote was surprisingly clear

A special session at U.N. headquarters in New York was scheduled to take all of Friday. Instead, a morning motion that would have made it harder to oust Khan failed and diplomats quickly moved forward to vote on removal, several hours ahead of schedule, according to three diplomats familiar with the proceedings.

Iva Vukusic, a researcher at Utrecht University who has been following the process, said she was surprised by how decisive it was. "The numbers indicate that there is more agreement than previously thought," she told the AP.

Khan's ouster comes at an already difficult time

The decision comes at a time when the global tribunal is under enormous pressure. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced last week that Washington was launching a "sweeping campaign to dismantle the threat posed by the International Criminal Court to U.S. sovereignty."

Hours after Friday's vote, Venezuela announced it would withdraw from the court, saying its work reflects a "demonstrated geographical bias." Félix Plasencia, the country's foreign affairs minister, made the announcement in a statement.

Trump's administration already has brought sanctions against Khan and a dozen other ICC staff in retaliation for investigations into Israeli officials in Gaza and U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan.

The allegations became entwined with the court's investigation into the war in Gaza, with Khan's supporters arguing that the warrants the court has issued for top Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, were at stake.

Palestinian representatives were quick to push back on that narrative. "The vote by the Assembly of States Parties to remove the Prosecutor was not a political proxy vote on any Situation before the ICC," Palestinian Ambassador to the Netherlands Ammar Hijazi said in a statement.

Khan's removal will have no immediate impact on the arrest warrants which can only be withdrawn by ICC judges.

The work of the court will continue

Khan's two deputy prosecutors have helmed the office since he stepped down in May 2025. In a statement, the office of the prosecutor said the pair will continue with its "leadership, management and administration," until a new chief is selected.

It is not clear yet when member states will be able to decide on Khan's replacement. His election in 2021 took nearly 18 months and drew criticism from civil society groups over the lack of stringent background checks on the candidates to ensure they met the requirement of "high moral character."

There may be more legal proceedings to come

The removal vote may not be the end of the process for Khan. He intends to "challenge the lawfulness and fairness of the decision through all available legal mechanisms," attorney Tayab Ali said in a statement.

There is no appeals process for his removal but all ICC staff are entitled to bring complaints to a special labor tribunal based in Geneva.

Khan's lawyers criticized the process leading to his ouster, complaining that he was blocked from addressing the session Friday and arguing the regulations had been rewritten to disadvantage him.

On Monday, lawyers and investigators will return to the court's headquarters in The Hague with at least some clarity about the future. "I hope now the court can move on and focus on its core work of dealing with cases," Vukusic said.

How the lighthearted social media trend of 'teen takeovers' took a serious turn

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

When Damarion Spann, 18, saw an Instagram flier calling for a massive gathering on a beach near downtown Chicago, he immediately wanted to go. Thousands of others joined him that night on the sand, blasting music and dancing.

The cultural trend of so-called teen takeovers has popped up across the U.S. in recent years, influencing local policing and national politics. The events, often hyped online and captured in videos on social media, have led to shootings, theft and vandalism. City officials and police are concerned about an increase over the summer, and are under pressure to prevent similar gatherings or to punish those who participate.

Over the July 4 holiday weekend, several thousand young people converged in two spots in Raleigh, North Carolina, police said. Nine people, including an adult who was not part of the gatherings, were shot and wounded.

There were also takeovers in Pensacola, Florida, where a 19-year-old was shot and killed; and Newport Beach, California, where more than 400 were arrested after the police chief said teens launched "explosive mortars and other projectiles" at officers ordering them to disperse.

But Spann and other teens say that the events are largely misunderstood. They point to formal curfews or limits on group size at malls and movie theaters that have made it harder for teens to gather, exacerbating a feeling of disconnection they trace back to remote learning during the coronavirus pandemic.

How cities are tracking the social media trend

Communities and police across the country are trying to identify organizers, fine parents of those involved and impose curfews.

In Detroit, officials say they "thwarted" 19 gatherings so far this year by monitoring time and location changes as young people coordinated across social media, said Teferi Brent, director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Community Safety.

"We have eyes on all the behaviors and activities of those who have expressed interest in trying to take over and we have done a good job of being way ahead of the curve and being able to prevent a lot of these things," Brent said.

Alderperson Jessie Fuentes, who chairs the Chicago City Council's subcommittee on Youth Employment, said her office has tried to find solutions that don't rely exclusively on police and instead coordinate with parents and community members to prevent conflict or crimes.

Blue Island, a south Chicago suburb, has taken another tact: to fine parents or guardians and use the funds to cover clean up after events. That might include debris left behind or other damages like cars dented from scores of teens clambering over them while fleeing police.

Other places have taken harsher approaches, as in Florida, where state officials said prosecutors can

apply racketeering laws, typically targeting criminal gangs or organized crime, if takeovers appear to be facilitated by "an organized network."

But some have pushed back on the idea that the threat of harsh legal punishment could prevent the gatherings in the first place.

"What we know about adolescent brain development is that the stakes are not going to be what prevents a young person from engaging in risky behavior," said Melissa Milchman, the executive director for the nonpartisan organization the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. Milchman added that mass arrests often ensnare those who are going for innocent fun without preventing others from breaking the law.

Teens say there aren't safe spaces for them to gather

For Spann, the recent media attention on the events has largely failed to capture the appeal to young people.

"You feel like a young person who has freedom, who's not being held to something," said Spann, who is Black. At the event he went to, he was able to catch up with people he hadn't seen since 8th grade.

He said that the events are a direct result of a cascade of school closures across Black neighborhoods over the past couple decades in Chicago. To deter people from gathering even at basketball courts, where there were sometimes fights, officials have removed the nets. Spann said that his mom, who grew up in the same neighborhood, frequently talks about how much easier it used to be to hang out outside without a fear of gun violence.

When Spann goes to malls in more affluent areas with his mostly Black group of friends, shoppers often stare and security guards question them. To avoid scrutiny, Spann and his friends sometimes sneak into outdoor shopping centers or areas downtown in smaller groups at staggered times.

By contrast, in the same spaces, Spann said, "If I'm with my white friends, I feel like I belong."

Despite the physical dangers that come with takeovers and the threat of getting a ticket or even arrested, the allure is strong, according to Jeffrey Bernstein, a psychologist and author.

"The kids still do it because they feel like it's their second family," which he said "really takes over as their primary sense of connection."

"They're getting things from their peers that they can't get from their parents."

Some cities have tried to meet that need head-on, instead of cracking down with law enforcement.

In St. Louis, officers have started to bring some teens to community centers instead of jails so their parents can pick them up, and in Baltimore, officials have tried leaning on public schools to provide alternative programming. In Chicago, Spann received a $11,000 grant from the city and partnering nonprofits to host an event for his peers at the end of the summer, in an effort to give his community more places to gather.

What cities are doing to address 'teen takeovers'

In April, Daveion Page, a 16-year-old in Detroit, was bored. He turned to his phone, creating a post on social media promoting a teen takeover. Hundreds of teens soon flocked to a site downtown and fights broke out by the end of the night. At another takeover in May, a 14-year-old was shot and wounded.

After the Detroit event in April, Page told reporters that he didn't intend for the takeover he organized to result in violence.

"I just wanted to get out of the house, have fun, enjoy time with my family and my homeboys and my homegirls, too," said Page, who was flanked by Detroit Mayor Mary Sheffield and other city officials at a news conference.

He told city officials that young people might respond if there were more safe places to gather.

Before the takeovers, there were already plans to use $1.5 million from the city's budget for summer programming and to support violence prevention programs. In response to the takeovers, the city has launched an office of youth affairs, met and listened to students at schools, and created a youth advisory board comprised of teens and young adults.

"We have brought them to the table and made them a part of our structure in regards to identifying what the needs and concerns are of the young people in the city," Brent said.

In Detroit, a late-night basketball league has formed as an alternative hangout spot for teens and young adults. Jerseys and sneakers are provided by the city.

"This league just helps me find something to do," Cameron Chandler, 21, said while playing basketball at the recreation center.

He's never participated in a takeover, but recently after practice, he stumbled on one near his home.

"There were a lot of cops and some people got arrested," Chandler said. "You just have to think, 'that could easily be me.'"

How to run for reelection in a messy Congress? It's not easy

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House leaders sent lawmakers home for summer campaigning after one of the rockiest sessions in recent memory as voters decide which party to put in power in Congress for the remainder of President Donald Trump's term.

For those seeking to stay in office, particularly the newest members, it can be a tough sell.

"I only know a dysfunctional Congress," said Rep. Suhas Subramanyam, a freshman from Virginia.

The Democrat said it's best to campaign on his own record delivering for constituents, rather than on the performance of Congress, as his party tries to wrest control from the Republicans.

"It's virtually impossible to sell the performance of Congress to the American people because Congress is such an easy punching bag," he said. "And this particular Congress has been ceding too much of its authority to the executive branch."

He said, "I tell people to sell yourself and what you've tried to do."

Yet Republican Rep. Brandon Gill, a freshman from Texas who has emerged as one of the party's rising figures, particularly on Trump's hard-line immigration enforcement agenda, argued there's plenty to show to voters back home.

"We've gotten a lot done," he said

"Cutting taxes across the board, over $100 billion for border security, repealing half the Green New Deal, the biggest mandatory spending reform in history — pretty historic stuff," he said.

"Everybody always wants Congress to move faster than it does, but we've been extremely productive."

Midterm elections often become a referendum on the party in power

Control of Congress is often an afterthought in presidential election years when the White House is at stake. But in the midterms, when lawmakers face voters as they will this fall, the races largely become a referendum on the party in power.

Republicans have history against running against them, as the president's party often encounters losses during the midterm elections — a "thumping," as George W. Bush put it, a "shellacking" as Barack Obama said — and a pendulum nation swings.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, who is about to embark on a cross-country trek to raise millions of dollars for his party and visit lawmakers' home districts, remains bullish that Republicans will not only keep their House majority control — but grow their numbers.

"This week we continued to deliver for the people, and we're going to continue that straight through the end of this year," Johnson said after a flurry of legislating before sending lawmakers home for summer.

Republicans in a single day adopted a budget resolution seeking $95 billion for the Iran war and other priorities; advanced a $1 trillion Pentagon bill renaming it the Department of War; and approved legislation to clamp down on stock trading in Congress, all over Democratic objections.

"We're going to run through the tape," Johnson said.

Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, who is in line to become House speaker if his party wins control, will launch "100 Days of Action" on Sunday as he works to take the majority and impose a check on Trump's White House.

"It's not going to be easy, right?" Jeffries told reporters. "No one's going to give it to us. We have to take it in a way that is consistent with the values of the American people."

Control of Congress sets the agenda for the nation

With its 435 seats being contested, control of the House often narrows to the tiniest slice of the country.

Fewer than 20 seats are considered genuine toss-ups, according to analysts. The rest are considered safer seats, drawn with map lines designed to favor one party over the other — including new maps still being drawn to eliminate Black majority districts largely in the Deep South after a landmark Supreme Court decision gutting the Voting Rights Act.

Millions of dollars are being spent that will make the difference between a return of the GOP majority eyeing more budget cuts or a new Democratic agenda that is expected to launch vast oversight and investigations into the Trump administration.

Even as he openly pines for a normal Congress, Johnson believes the country needs a steady hand at the wheel as he partners with the White House on Trump's priorities — and fend off Democratic investigations and the threat of impeachment.

"We are increasingly confident that we will hold and grow this majority in the House — and we must," he said.

Democrats under Jeffries make the case that Trump and the Republicans in charge have done nothing for Americans struggling with high costs of living. Instead, they say Trump waged war against Iran that sent gas prices soaring, slapped tariffs on goods that are spiking prices, deported longtime immigrants and slashed health care and food aid as part of Trump's big tax cuts bill last summer.

"They're flailing all over the place," Jeffries said.

Jeffries vowed that Democrats "will hold the crooks accountable" on a number of issues, including the Trump family's business dealings.

A throwback to communism or forward-looking new ideas

Johnson raises the specter of a mid-20th-century-style communist threat if Democrats win control with a new generation of far-left progressive candidates, some backed by the Democratic Socialists of America.

"We have been saying that this is an election that's shaping up as a contest between common sense and crazy," he said. Now, he said, it's "common sense versus communism."

Jeffries brushes past such warnings as unserious. "House Democrats aren't a cult," he said, a criticism his party often lobs at Trump's backers in Congress. "We're a coalition of people, public servants, who are committed to getting things done."

One of the newest lawmakers, Rep. James Gallagher, R-Calif., said he's just trying to focus on the issues important to constituents back home.

"We're in a time where there's a lot of division, unfortunately," he said. "And I think one key is like, Hey, trying to bring people together to solve problems for Americans, right?"

At least 35 people killed after buses collide in Syria, state media reports

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — At least 35 people have been killed and dozens injured after two buses collided on a highway linking the Syrian capital with the eastern province of Deir el-Zour on Saturday, state media reported.

Around 30 people were injured in the crash between a civilian bus and an Interior Ministry bus on the desert highway, the SANA news agency cited a health ministry official as saying.

Syrian military helicopters were reported to be involved in the operation at the scene.

The cause of the collision was not immediately known.

Today in History: July 26, Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, July 26, the 207th day of 2026. There are 158 days left in the year.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, July 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 051 ~ 80 of 80

Today in History:

On July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act, prohibiting discrimination based on mental or physical disabilities.

Also on this date:

In 1775, the Continental Congress established an independent postal system and appointed Benjamin Franklin its Postmaster General.

In 1847, the western African country of Liberia, founded by freed American slaves, declared its independence.

In 1863, Sam Houston, former president of the Republic of Texas, died in Huntsville at age 70.

In 1945, Winston Churchill resigned as Britain's prime minister after his Conservatives were soundly defeated by the Labour Party. Clement Attlee succeeded him.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act, which reorganized America's armed forces as the National Military Establishment and created the Central Intelligence Agency.

In 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the U.S. military.

In 1953, Fidel Castro began his revolt against Fulgencio Batista (fool-HEN'-see-oh bah-TEES'-tah) with an unsuccessful attack on an army barracks in eastern Cuba. (Castro ousted Batista in 1959.)

In 1971, Apollo 15 was launched from Cape Kennedy on America's fourth successful manned mission to the moon.

In 2002, the Republican-led House voted to create the Homeland Security Department in the biggest government reorganization in decades.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be nominated for president by a major political party at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

In 2018, the last six members of a Japanese doomsday cult who remained on death row were executed for a series of crimes in the 1990s, including a gas attack on Tokyo subways that killed 13 people. Previously, seven other cult members were executed on July 6 of that year.

In 2020, a procession with the casket of the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Alabama, where Lewis and other civil rights marchers were beaten 55 years earlier.

Today's Birthdays: Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard is 87. Football Hall of Famer Bob Lilly is 87. Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer Darlene Love is 85. The Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger is 83. Actor Helen Mirren is 81. Rock musician Roger Taylor (Queen) is 77. Olympic gold medal figure skater Dorothy Hamill is 70. Actor Kevin Spacey is 67. Actor Sandra Bullock is 62. Actor Jeremy Piven is 61. Actor Jason Statham is 59. Actor Olivia Williams is 58. Actor Kate Beckinsale is 53. Former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is 46. Actor Juliet Rylance is 47. Actor Monica Raymund is 40. Actor Francia Raisa is 38. Actor-singer Taylor Momsen is 33. Actor Elizabeth Gillies is 33. Actor Thomasin McKenzie is 26.