

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

Wednesday, July 29

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, mashed potatoes and gravy, broccoli, fruit, whole wheat bread.

GHS Golf Fundraiser Lunch

Emmanuel Lutheran: Women's Guest Night Meal and speaker, 6 p.m.

Junior Legion Regional Tournament at Sisseton: Championship game at 2 p.m. If second game is needed, it will be played 30 minutes after the first game.

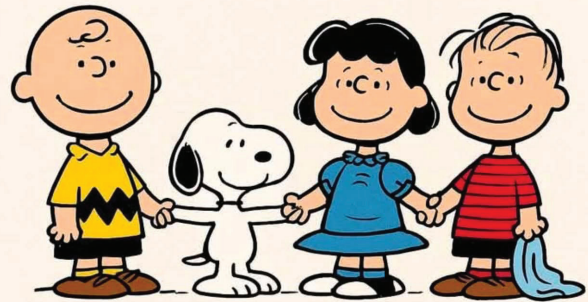
Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



It's not
what we have
in life, but
who we have in our
life that matters.
Good Morning



Thursday, July 30

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread.

1st-3rd Grade BB Camp, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., GHS Arena

Friday, July 31

Senior Menu: Baked fish, oven roasted potatoes, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

1st-3rd Grade BB Camp, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., GHS Arena

State B Legion Tournament in Madison through August 4th.

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1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

Apple's Upgrade Push

Apple yesterday announced a new option for customers to lease iPhones, iPads, Macs, and Apple Watches. The move came as the company briefly hit a \$5T valuation after surpassing Nvidia in market value earlier this week.

The program, called Upgrade, involves a partnership with buy-now-pay-later company Klarna. Customers can lease iPhones for up to two years, starting at \$17.99 per month (the iPhone 17 Pro will cost up to \$45.99 per month). At the one- or two-year mark, customers can purchase their existing device for an additional fee, upgrade it, or return it. Estimates show the average iPhone replacement cycle has grown to nearly four years; if the leasing option is successful, a portion of Apple's customers are expected to upgrade almost twice as often. The program may also allow Apple to better spread out revenue across quarters.

Did you know the iPhone drove 51% of Apple's total revenue in FY2024?

\$20B FIFA Spinoff

FIFA, soccer's nonprofit global governing body, is planning to create a \$20B for-profit spinoff to run commercial and event operations, including the World Cup.

Under the plan, FIFA would retain exclusive control over football governance, the match calendar and competitions, as well as regulatory and sporting decisions. Noncontrolling stakes of up to 20% would be offered to private investors to raise up to \$4.2B. One of the lead investors will reportedly be a venture capital fund founded by Joshua Kushner, the brother of President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. FIFA says the capital raise would be used to expand development funding for its 211 national member associations. Europe's soccer federation criticized the plan, accusing FIFA of commercializing soccer.

FIFA generated a record-breaking \$15B in revenue from the 2026 World Cup, driven by a 48-team format, massive broadcasting deals, and high ticket prices.

A Finger Lickin' Auction

Personal items and property belonging to KFC founder Colonel Harland Sanders went up for auction yesterday in Kentucky, marking the first time the personal collection was offered publicly.

The sale featured 68 pieces of memorabilia from Sanders and his wife, Claudia, including his signature black clip-on bow tie, engraved pressure cookers, personal watches, an original cash register, and a bust sculpted by his daughter. Among the most notable items is Sanders' 1964 day planner, containing handwritten notes and a list of 11 herbs and spices that later became the subject of a 2001 lawsuit by KFC seeking to keep the contents private.

The couple's three-acre Shelbyville property—home to the 5,000-square-foot Blackwood Hall mansion and the still-operating Claudia Sanders Dinner House—is being sold via sealed-bid auction, with final bids due Friday.

Sanders sold KFC for \$2M in 1964. Today, KFC is the world's third most valuable restaurant brand.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Booker Prize Foundation announces 13 semifinalists for the top fiction prize, including two previous winners and three debut authors.

Ariana Grande sues two unidentified hackers, alleging they leaked hundreds of songs and studio footage stolen from her collaborators.

Grande's eighth studio album, "Petal," drops Friday.

Apple TV unveils trailer for "Ted Lasso" Season 4 ahead of Aug. 5 release date; the season follows the titular character as he begins coaching a women's soccer team.

Science & Technology

Baidu begins testing autonomous vehicles with human safety operators in London in partnership with Lyft; the Chinese tech giant is vying to compete with Alphabet's Waymo, which began testing robotaxis in the city earlier this year.

Scientists discover moth species that has 33 taste and scent receptors on its wings that it uses to identify which plants to lay its eggs on.

Smart wound dressing captures and rereleases the body's own healing proteins to accelerate healing of living human skin in laboratory tests.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +1.0%, Nasdaq -0.2%).

Forty stock market terms everyone should know.

Shein's US operations under investigation by the Federal Trade Commission, company reveals ahead of initial public offering; details not disclosed.

eBay, former executives to pay \$56M to couple who was target of harassment and stalking scheme.

Johnson & Johnson offers \$5.5B to settle remaining lawsuits alleging the company's talc-based products caused ovarian cancer.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump eulogizes the late Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) at memorial service in Washington, DC.

Senate confirms Jay Clayton as director of national intelligence.

Teen receives life sentence without parole for fatally shooting four people in 2024 at Georgia's Apalachee High School.

A 7.1 magnitude earthquake hits Japan's Kyushu island, injuring at least 100 people and trapping others inside a shopping mall, part of which has collapsed.

BROWN COUNTY FAIR

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ROWDY
IN THE STIX



ABERDEEN, SD

AUGUST 10-16, 2026

TICKETS ON
SALE NOW!



Follow the QR code
for more info!

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Children's
Miracle Network
Hospitals



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!



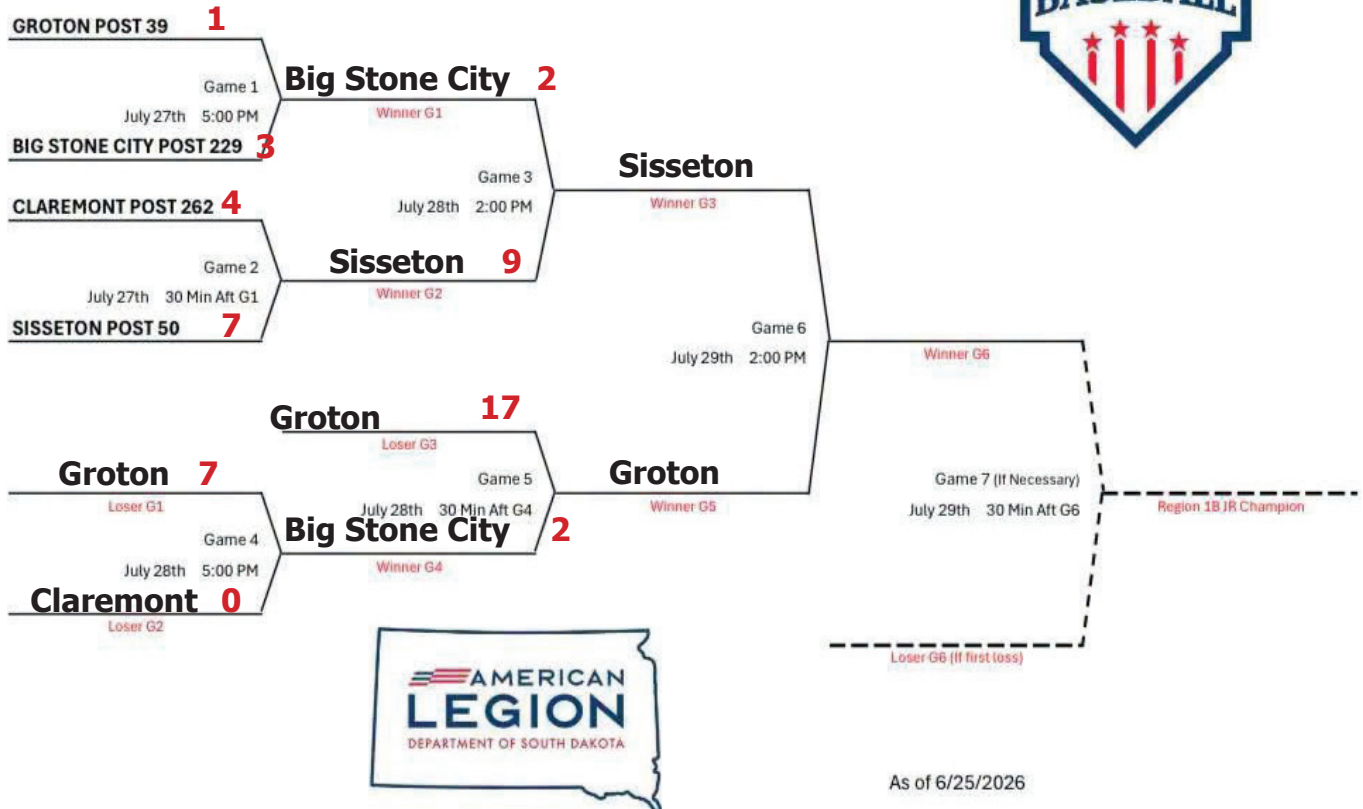
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SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION "B" JUNIOR BASEBALL

REGION 1B

SISSETON LEGION POST 50
JULY 27TH - JULY 29TH, 2026



Groton battles into Region 1B championship with two decisive victories

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion kept its season alive Tuesday at the Region 1B Junior Legion Baseball Tournament in Sisseton, winning twice to advance to the championship round through the losers bracket.

Groton opened the day with a 7-0 shutout of Claremont before erupting for a 17-3 victory over Big Stone City in the elimination bracket. Meanwhile, host Sisseton defeated Big Stone City 9-2 earlier in the day to reach the championship unbeaten.

The tournament now sets up a winner-take-all scenario with a twist. Sisseton needs just one victory to capture the Region 1B title and qualify for the state tournament, while Groton must defeat Sisseton twice to claim the championship after fighting its way back through the consolation bracket.

Groton's first win of the day came behind a dominant pitching performance from Kason Oswald, who tossed a one-hit shutout against Claremont.

Groton wasted little time getting on the scoreboard. T.C. Schuster lined an RBI single down the right field line and Ryder Schelle followed with an RBI double in the opening inning for a quick 2-0 lead. Schelle added another run in the third with an RBI single to left as Groton steadily pulled away.

Oswald was in complete control throughout the seven-inning contest, allowing just one hit while blanking the Claremont lineup.

Schelle finished 3-for-4 with two RBIs to pace the offense, while Schuster also drove in two runs. Braden Fliehs added a pair of hits as Groton collected nine hits in the victory.

The momentum carried over into Groton's second elimination game, where Post 39 overwhelmed Big Stone City with a nine-run third inning on the way to a 17-3 victory.

Groton built an early 4-0 lead in the first inning as Braden Fliehs was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, Schelle added a sacrifice fly, Fliehs later delivered an RBI single and Oswald drew a bases-loaded walk.

The game broke wide open in the third when Groton sent 14 batters to the plate. An error plated three runs before Schuster doubled home another. Schelle drove in a run on a fielder's choice, Lincoln Shilhanek followed with an RBI single, Zach Fliehs added another run-scoring hit and John Bisbee capped the rally with a two-run single.

Schuster earned the victory on the mound, allowing three runs on four hits while striking out three over two innings. Braden Fliehs provided effective relief, tossing 2 1/3 scoreless innings without allowing a hit.

Schelle drove in three runs to lead the offense. Braden Fliehs and Shilhanek each collected two hits, while Oswald reached base three times via walks as Groton showed outstanding patience with 10 walks. Post 39 also turned two double plays defensively.

Groton now turns its attention to the championship round against Sisseton. Having battled through the elimination bracket with back-to-back convincing victories, Post 39 will attempt to hand the hosts their first loss of the tournament before trying to defeat them a second time for the Region 1B championship and a berth in the state tournament.



Groton Jr Legion starting pitcher Kason Oswald pitched a one hit shutout vs Big Stone. He is pitching in the rain prior to 2 inning rain delay. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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The Groton Junior Legion team waiting in their dugout prior to the restart of the Tuesday afternoons game with the Claremont Honkers.

L-R Jordan Schwan; Xavior Ellenbecker; TC Schuster; Asher Zimmerman; Wes Borg; Lincoln Shilhanek; John Bisbee; Kason Oswald; Braeden Fliehs; Ryan Schelle; Trayce Schelle; Zac Fliehs; Aaron Severson. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Groton Jordan Schwan connects for a solid hit into right field. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Groton Coach Aaron Severson confers with Trayce Schelle on 3rd base while the Claremont 3rd baseman looks on. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Braeden Fliehs tags 1st while Groton Xavior Ellenbecker gives him advise as the base coach. The Claremont 1st baseman looks on. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Groton's Lincoln Shilhanek ready for the next pitch. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Kason Oswald pitches a 1 hit shutout vs Claremont. His joy from the win is apparent. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Groton John Bisbee pitches in relief in second game win vs Big Stone. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



TC Schuster a power on the mound for Groton's second win. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion **7 - 0** Claremont Honkers Post 262/VFW JH

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday July 28, 2026

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	2	0	1	0	1	0	3	7	9	1
CLRM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5

BATTING

Groton Post 39...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (C)	4	2	1	0	0	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
T Schuster #3 (SS)	3	1	1	2	0	0
B Fliehs #19 (3B)	3	2	2	0	1	1
R Schelle #6 (2B)	4	0	3	2	0	0
L Shilhan... #17 (1B)	4	0	0	0	0	0
Z Fliehs #23 (RF)	4	0	0	0	0	1
Asher Zi... #9 (RF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
W Borg #1	3	0	0	0	0	0
J Bisbee #15 (LF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
X Ellenb... #8 (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	31	7	9	4	1	2

2B: R Schelle, **TB:** J Schwan, T Schuster, A Abeln, B Fliehs 2, J Bisbee, R Schelle 4, **SF:** T Schuster, **CS:** B Fliehs, **HBP:** J Schwan, **SB:** J Schwan, A Abeln, B Fliehs, **LOB:** 6

PITCHING

Groton Pos...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Oswald #12	7.0	1	0	0	3	5	0
Totals	7.0	1	0	0	3	5	0

W: K Oswald, **P-S:** K Oswald 83-52, **HBP:** K Oswald, **BF:** K Oswald 25, **E:** K Oswald

Claremont Honk...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
N Schuller #19 (P)	3	0	0	0	0	0
K Mckane #18 (SS)	3	0	1	0	0	0
C Reints #35 (C)	3	0	0	0	0	2
W More... #25 (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	0
C Glines #47 (1B)	2	0	0	0	1	0
N Cutler #55 (RF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
B Zerr #31 (LF)	2	0	0	0	1	0
R Bruns #24 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
C Schuller #27 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Totals	21	0	1	0	3	5

TB: K Mckane, **CS:** K Mckane, **HBP:** N Cutler, **LOB:** 4

Claremont...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Schul... #19	7.0	9	7	2	1	2	0
Totals	7.0	9	7	2	1	2	0

L: N Schuller, **P-S:** N Schuller 93-58, **HBP:** N Schuller, **BF:** N Schuller 34, **E:** W Morehouse 3, C Reints, C Schuller

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion 17 - 3 Badgers Post 229

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday July 28, 2026

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	4	0	9	2	2	17	9	1
BDGR	3	0	0	0	0	3	5	3

BATTING

Groton Post 39...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (SS)	4	3	1	0	1	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	3	3	1	2	2	0
T Schuster #3 (P)	4	2	1	1	1	0
B Fliehs #19 (3B)	2	3	1	1	2	0
R Schelle #6 (2B)	4	1	0	3	0	0
Trayce... #16 (2B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
L Shilhan... #17 (1B)	3	1	2	1	1	1
Z Fliehs #23 (RF)	4	2	2	2	0	0
K Oswald #12 (C)	1	0	0	0	3	0
J Bisbee #15 (LF)	3	2	1	1	0	0
Totals	28	17	9	11	10	1

2B: J Schwan, T Schuster, **TB:** L Shilhanek 2, B Fliehs, J Schwan 2, J Bisbee, Z Fliehs 2, T Schuster 2, A Abeln, **HBP:** B Fliehs, J Bisbee, **SB:** B Fliehs, J Schwan, T Schuster, **LOB:** 8

PITCHING

Groton Pos...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Schust... #3	2.0	4	3	3	0	3	0
B Fliehs #19	2.1	0	0	0	1	1	0
J Bisbee #15	0.2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	5.0	5	3	3	1	4	0

W: T Schuster, **P-S:** B Fliehs 29-17, J Bisbee 5-4, T Schuster 30-21, **HBP:** T Schuster, **BF:** B Fliehs 8, J Bisbee 3, T Schuster 10, **E:** A Abeln

Badgers Post 229	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
N Hoffm... #24 (LF)	3	1	2	0	0	1
B Vangsn... #4 (2B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
A Nelson #16 (3B)	3	1	0	0	0	0
C Ohm #19	2	1	1	1	0	0
A Hughes #8 (RF)	2	0	1	1	0	0
J Haugen #9 (1B)	0	0	0	0	1	0
M Cochr... #12 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
T Jensen #6 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	1
N Kindlebe... #2 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Totals	19	3	5	2	1	4

TB: A Hughes, C Ohm, B Vangsness, N Hoffman 2, **HBP:** J Haugen, **LOB:** 3

Badgers P...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Lovgr... #11	1.0	2	4	4	3	1	0
J Hartman #6	1.2	4	9	1	3	0	0
A Hughes #8	1.2	3	4	2	4	0	0
N Hoff... #24	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	5.0	9	17	8	10	1	0

L: C Lovgren, **P-S:** A Hughes 45-21, C Lovgren 37-16, N Hoffman 3-3, J Hartman 51-26, **WP:** A Hughes, C Lovgren, J Hartman, **HBP:** C Lovgren, J Hartman, **BF:** A Hughes 13, C Lovgren 9, N Hoffman 2, J Hartman 16, **E:** T Jensen, A Nelson 2

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Minnehaha County Pursuit

What: Highway Patrol pursuit of single vehicle
Where: I-229 and 10th Street, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
When: 12:32 p.m., Sunday, July 26, 2026

Driver 1: Nathan John Boswell, 32-year-old-male from Ebro, Minnesota, no injuries
Vehicle 1: 2007 Chrysler Aspen
Seat Belt Used: Unknown

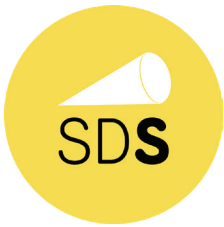
Minnehaha County, S.D.- A 32-year-old Minnesota man is in custody following a pursuit with the South Dakota Highway Patrol in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and the surrounding area.

Preliminary information indicates the Sioux Falls Police Department responded to a reported robbery at a HyVee gas station and initiated a pursuit of Nathan John Boswell, the driver of a 2007 Chrysler Aspen. Law enforcement lost sight of the vehicle. A short time later the South Dakota Highway Patrol observed the vehicle driving westbound on I-90 and attempted to stop the vehicle. The vehicle failed to stop and a pursuit was initiated. The vehicle entered the eastbound lanes of I-90 and proceeded to travel westbound in the eastbound lanes. The South Dakota Highway Patrol disabled the Chrysler as it exited the interstate at 451st Street in McCook County, and Boswell barricaded himself inside the vehicle. Numerous attempts were made to get Boswell to exit the vehicle. Boswell refused to exit the vehicle. The Minnehaha County SWAT Team responded and deployed gas. The suspect exited his vehicle and was taken into custody without further incident. Boswell was taken to the hospital and medically cleared before being taken to the Minnehaha County Jail.

Other agencies involved were the Sioux Falls Police Department, the Moody County Sherriff's Office, the Minnehaha County Sherriff's Office, and the McCook County Sherriff's Office.

All information released is preliminary.

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota governor wins Republican nomination to seek his own term after succeeding Noem

Rhoden surges past Doeden in runoff after finishing second to him in four-way primary
BY SETH TUPPER

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden won the Republican Party's nomination for governor Tuesday in a runoff election, earning the chance to seek his own four years in office after filling out the remainder of former Gov. Kristi Noem's last term.

The Associated Press called the race at 8:08 p.m. Central. Complete returns several hours later showed Rhoden with 71% of the votes and a 42-point win over Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden, with 29%. Rhoden won in 64 of the state's 66 counties, with only Fall River and Todd counties going for Doeden.

Rhoden spoke to his supporters at a results watch party in Sioux Falls at about 9 p.m. He reflected on the early days of the campaign when he trailed in multiple public polls.

"There were times when I really felt like the good Lord was trying to teach me something," Rhoden said. "And there were times when all I had to rely on was the Scripture: You walk by faith, not by sight. And that's what we do. You keep moving forward."

Doeden spoke to his supporters in Aberdeen at about the same time and said he had called Rhoden to congratulate him and to pledge support for him in the general election.

"I have said since day one on this long, crazy journey that my singular goal was to unite our amazing Republican Party and move this state forward, and that journey has not ended here, my friends," Doeden said.

Doeden and Rhoden made it into the runoff by finishing first and second in a four-way June 2 primary election. Nobody in that race reached 35%, which triggered the first use of a 1985 state law requiring a



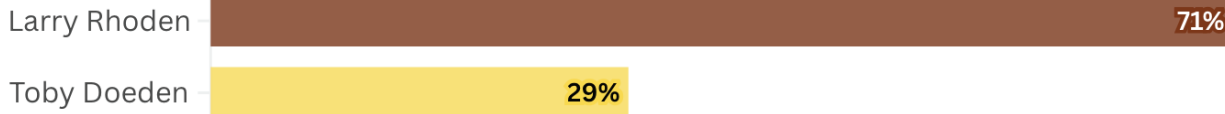
South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden delivers a victory speech at his election night watch party in downtown Sioux Falls on July 28, 2026. Rhoden won the Republican nomination for governor in a runoff election with political newcomer Toby Doeden. (Photo by Makenzie

Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Election returns

Republican governor nomination runoff, July 28, 2026

Precincts fully reporting: 650/650



Source: [South Dakota Secretary of State's Office](#) • Results are unofficial until certified

Made with Flourish • Create a chart

runoff when no candidate meets that threshold in a statewide primary.

Republican turnout for the runoff was 36%, after 43% of Republican voters turned out for the primary. Only registered Republicans were allowed to vote in the runoff.

Rhoden will face Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers, a former state legislator, in the Nov. 3 general election. The last time South Dakota elected a Democratic governor was 52 years ago in 1974.

Gov. Kristi Noem kickstarted the Republican primary race when she resigned in January 2025 to accept a job in President Donald Trump's administration. Rhoden was Noem's lieutenant governor and was automatically promoted to serve the last two years of her second term.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, entered the race as the presumptive frontrunner and led in several early polls. He had the most campaign money at his disposal and the highest statewide profile due to his four terms in the U.S. House, his previous service on the state Public Utilities Commission, and his 20-plus years of involvement in politics.

On primary election night, Doeden — who had never previously sought elected office — stunned the political establishment by finishing first at 31%, followed by Rhoden at 25%, Johnson at 23% and state House Speaker Jon Hansen at 21%. Johnson and Hansen not only failed to make the runoff but will leave office when their respective terms in the U.S. and state House end in January.

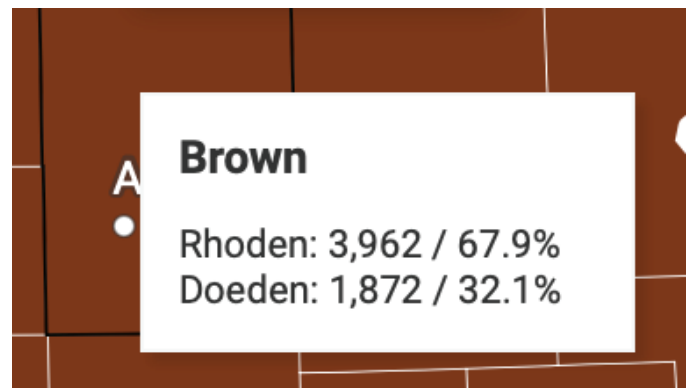
From the June 2 primary through the July 13 registration deadline for Tuesday's runoff, the number of registered Republicans in the state grew by more than 7,300. One of those new Republicans was Alfred Slaathaug, of rural Brandon, who said in a polling-place interview that he had switched his registration from the Democratic Party.

"I changed my party just to vote for Rhoden," Slaathaug said. "I don't trust Doeden at all."

Doeden ran on shifting anti-property tax pledges

Doeden spent at least \$4 million of his own money in the race, according to campaign finance reports. The 51-year-old built his fortune by owning vehicle dealerships and diversifying into other businesses and real estate. He has also described himself as an investor in bitcoin, a type of digital money secured with encryption technology.

Doeden tried to position himself early in the campaign as the most pro-Trump candidate, often mentioning



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Trump in advertisements and appearances — although not as much in recent months as Trump's national approval rating fell below 40%.

Doeden also ran on an anti-property tax platform, pledging at times to eliminate property taxes, at other times to phase them out, and saying earlier this month that his pledge applied only to homeowners.

Homeowner property taxes rose sharply in parts of South Dakota as homebuyers flocked to the state and drove up prices during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, when Noem invited people to relocate for the state's freedom from mask mandates, business restrictions and other pandemic precautions.

South Dakotans paid more than \$1.8 billion in property taxes last year, including \$815 million by homeowners, but none of that money goes to state government, which is primarily funded by sales tax revenue. Property taxes go to schools, counties, cities and other local governments.

Searchlight asked Doeden in a May podcast interview how he would replace lost property tax revenue for local governments.

"Once the economy starts growing, and it will; once I start collecting external revenue, which we will; and once I cut all the fat and pork out of our state budget, you are going to see, very quickly, within a matter of a couple years, a significant amount of annual budget surpluses," Doeden said. "And yes, I will use that money to target the phase-out of things like property tax."

A Sioux Falls voter, Mandy Berkhof, said Tuesday at her polling place that she voted for Doeden in the primary and the runoff.

"I just feel like he is going to bring a lot to South Dakota communities, things that we need and want, a little bit more than the other person," Berkhof said.

Rhoden criticized Doeden, touted own record

Rhoden said eliminating local property tax revenue would require the state to replace it, and he said that would blow a \$1.8 billion hole in the state budget. The Rhoden campaign launched a "Reckless Toby Doeden" website featuring those assertions during the runoff campaign.

Those criticisms resonated with 55-year-old Scott Isburg, who said Tuesday at his polling place in Pierre that he voted for Rhoden in the primary and the runoff. Isburg said he trusted Rhoden to "run government in a way that'll actually work."

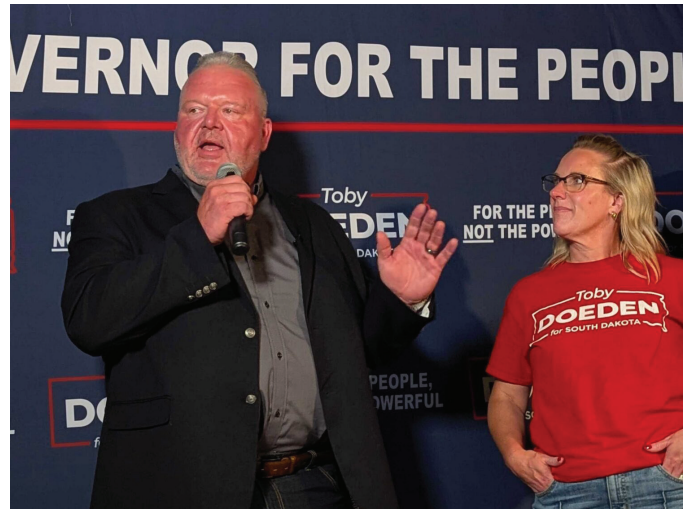
"I was a little bit concerned with some of the potential policies from Toby, if they would work or not," Isburg said.

Rhoden also aired advertisements during the runoff campaign about Doeden's lack of past involvement in Republican politics, including an audio recording of Doeden saying "I think I may have even voted for Barack Obama." Doeden has since denied voting for Obama.

Aside from those criticisms of his opponent, Rhoden ran on his record from nearly 18 months as governor, which has included working with legislators to sign several major bills into law.

Those include laws capturing revenue from sales tax increases to reduce homeowner property taxes, a law banning the use of a legal procedure known as eminent domain to gain land access for carbon capture pipelines, and a law funding construction of a \$650 million replacement for the oldest parts of the state's 145-year-old penitentiary.

"Good policy makes good politics," Rhoden said while launching his campaign in November.



Toby Doeden speaks to reporters at his election night watch party in Aberdeen on July 28, 2026, after losing the runoff for the South Dakota Republican nomination for governor. With Doeden is his wife, Liz. (Photo

by John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Sioux Falls voter Susan DeSautel said Tuesday at her polling place that Rhoden's experience was an important factor in her support for him.

"I know there are a lot of people who like Doeden.

I think they want somebody totally from left field, who's not a politician," DeSautel said. "And I understand that, but you've got to have some experience as a politician. We need that in a governor."

Before Rhoden served as lieutenant governor and governor, he was a rancher, custom welder and legislator. He lives on a ranch near Union Center in the western part of the state.

If he wins in November, the 67-year-old Rhoden could potentially choose to run again four years later for what would amount to a third term. The state constitution includes term limits, saying "no person shall be elected to more than two consecutive terms as governor," but Rhoden is serving his current stint as governor through the line of succession rather than direct election to the job.

South Dakota Searchlight's John Hult, Joshua Haiar, Makenzie Huber and Meghan O'Brien contributed to this report.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

As Washington says goodbye to Graham, Thune calls him a 'towering figure of the Senate'

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress paid tribute to their longtime colleague, the late Republican Sen. Lindsey O. Graham, in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda Tuesday morning ahead of a funeral service at Washington National Cathedral, where Graham's close ally President Donald Trump was expected to speak.

Heads of state, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, flew to Washington to attend the service. Graham was a steadfast Israel supporter, and advocated for U.S. support to Ukraine, which he visited in his last days before dying on July 11.

Vice President JD Vance, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., and U.S. Rep. Sheri Biggs, R-S.C., remembered the South Carolina lawmaker as a staunch conservative with a sense of humor who never forgot his humble roots in a small town.

"Here in Washington, a town where many lose sight of who sent them here and why they are here at all, Lindsey never forgot where he came from or who he was here to serve," said Biggs, who represents the same district Graham represented as a House member.

A visibly emotional Thune praised Graham as a "towering figure of the Senate and on the international stage."

"He was a fierce defender of Ukraine, he was a fierce defender of the unborn. And on the surface these might seem like two completely separate issues, but it strikes me in another way they are both of a piece. In both cases, Lindsey Graham saw injustice, and he spoke up," Thune said.

Vance, a former senator, recalled a heated argument with Graham last Congress at a Senate lunch about a funding bill for Ukraine and his surprise that Graham continued to build support for a railway safety bill championed by Vance following the 2023 toxic train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

"And that was the kind of colleague he could be — a person you argued with and fought with in one minute but behind the scenes, without collecting an ounce of credit, was working for you and working for the things that you cared about," Vance said.

Vance also credited Graham with the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who faced allegations of past sexual misconduct during his Senate confirmation hearings.

"What he saw happening to Kavanaugh was not policy disagreement; it was character assassination," Vance said. "And Lindsey got as fiery and as passionate as I have ever seen a human being get during a judicial confirmation, and I believe that he saved that nomination."

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A last trip to Kyiv

Graham's last act as a senator was a trip to Kyiv to meet with Zelenskyy.

In his final remarks to the press July 10 in Kyiv, Graham said he spoke to the White House to get the green light on a Russia sanctions bill.

"When I get back to Washington, I'm gonna go with Sen. (Richard) Blumenthal to the Republican and Democratic leader to see if we can find time to move this Russian sanctions package that would give tools to President Trump to help end this war," Graham said.

Graham announced the agreement with the White House in one of his last posts on X the day before his death.

Zelenskyy is expected to meet Tuesday evening with senators following Graham's funeral, and ahead of a Senate vote on Graham's sanctions legislation, which now bears his name in the bill title.

Trump wrote on Truth Social on July 19, "Republicans should add Iran to the Russian Sanctions Bill. That's what Lindsey wanted to do, and it was going to happen. IMPORTANT!!! President DJT"

Graham was an advocate and supporter for Trump's war in Iran, which the president launched in conjunction with Israel in late February.

Brief and sudden illness

Graham, who two days prior turned 71, died in Washington, D.C., after a "brief and sudden illness," according to an initial statement from his office. Preliminary findings shared the next day by Graham's office from the District of Columbia's medical examiner revealed the late senator died of an aortic dissection due to arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease.

Graham was scheduled to make his 64th appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press with Kristen Welker" on July 12. Welker instead hosted a special memorial episode recounting Graham's life, and interviewed Trump by phone.

Graham's sister, Darline Graham, was sworn in to the U.S. Senate on July 14 to serve the remainder of the late senator's term, which ends in January.

A special Republican primary election will be held in South Carolina on Aug. 11, with a tentative run-off election date set for Aug. 25, if needed.

Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform Sen. Darline Graham has his "Complete and Total Endorsement" for the quickly approaching special election.

"I hope Darline does this, in that there would be nobody better to honor the legacy of her beloved brother, Lindsey. Darline, who comes from an absolutely incredible family, has been a WINNER all of her life ... SHE WILL NEVER LET YOU DOWN. RUN, DARLINE, RUN!," Trump wrote.

Graham, an Air Force veteran, served in the U.S. House from 1995 to 2003, and was appointed as a manager for impeachment proceedings against former President Bill Clinton in 1998. Graham served as a U.S. senator from 2003 until his death in July.

He unsuccessfully ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, during which Graham was an outspoken critic of Trump.

Graham also vehemently denounced Trump on Jan. 6, 2021, after a mob of Trump supporters violently broke into the Capitol with the goal of stopping Congress from certifying the presidential election win for President Joe Biden.

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

South Dakota state senator facing election-related criminal charges ends his reelection campaign

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

Republican South Dakota state Sen. Tom Pischke, of Dell Rapids, ended his reelection campaign Tuesday as he continues to face felony charges for allegedly filing false or forged election-related documents.

"I have always prided myself on conducting campaigns with complete transparency on every issue," said a portion of a statement Pischke sent in response to South Dakota Searchlight questions. "Unfortunately," he added while citing the pending criminal charges, "I would not have been able to maintain that standard during the upcoming November election."

Pischke's withdrawal comes more than a month after prosecutors charged him with two felony counts alleging he submitted 16 candidate petitions for Minnehaha County Republican precinct committee positions without the candidates' knowledge.

The prosecution is playing out amid a long-running struggle over leadership of the county party. Obtaining a meeting quorum requires the presence of 20% of voting members, and filling more positions could make it more difficult for the county party's leaders to obtain a quorum and conduct official business.

Pischke has pleaded not guilty, and lawyers involved in the case have said a plea deal is possible.

Pischke's withdrawal leaves Republicans searching for a replacement candidate ahead of the Nov. 3 general election. Republican county party central committee members who reside in his district have until Aug. 11 to make a selection.

Bryan Breitling, an independent from Dell Rapids, is the only other candidate on the ballot for the District 25 Senate seat. The district includes Moody County and part of Minnehaha County.

"It has been an incredible honor to represent the wonderful people of District 25 over the past 10 years, and I look forward to whatever God has planned for me next," Pischke said in his statement.

Another South Dakota legislator, Rep. Travis Ismay, R-Newell, is facing a felony charge for allegedly causing intentional damage to a public road. He is scheduled for a court appearance this week in Butte County.

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

SD runoff voters talk decision-making, party switching, 'the lesser of two evils'

Republicans are selecting a nominee for governor in a top-two contest after the June primary

BY SETH TUPPER

Lucy Burdick didn't really vote in favor of anybody in Tuesday's runoff election for the South Dakota Republican Party's nomination for governor.

She voted against somebody.

"Today we have two choices," said the 71-year-old Burdick, of Fort Pierre. "Not Toby is who I picked."

She was talking about her opposition to Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden, who qualified for Tuesday's runoff by finishing first in a four-way June 2 primary. Doeden failed to reach 35% in that election, which threw him into Tuesday's top-two contest with the primary's second-place finisher, Gov. Larry Rhoden.

The South Dakota Secretary of State's Office planned to begin releasing runoff returns after polls close in western South Dakota at 8 p.m. Central, 7 p.m. Mountain on Tuesday.

Burdick said she dislikes Doeden's pledges to eliminate or phase out property taxes, which she said would "hurt the counties." All property tax revenue in the state goes to counties, schools, cities and other local governments.

Burdick said in the primary, she voted for U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, who finished third.

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Ronald Millar, 71, of Sioux Falls, also voted for Johnson in the primary and said his runoff vote was "more of a vote against Toby Doeden rather than a vote for Larry Rhoden."

He described Doeden as "more of a sound bite guy than someone who has an understanding of policy."

"It also came down to trust and the ability to collaborate with others," Millar said. "I don't always agree with Rhoden, but he has shown he is willing to listen to and work with others in making decisions about what is best for South Dakota."

Alfred Slaathaug, 75, of rural Brandon, said he switched his registration from Democrat to Republican so he could vote for "the lesser of two evils" in the runoff, which was only open to Republican voters.

He was one of potentially thousands of party switchers voting Tuesday, judging by the 7,382-person rise in registered South Dakota Republicans during the six weeks between the primary and the runoff registration deadline.

"I changed my party just to vote for Rhoden," Slaathaug said. "I don't trust Doeden at all."

The winner of the runoff will advance to the Nov. 3 general election to face Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers, a former legislator. The last time South Dakota elected a Democratic governor was 52 years ago in 1974.

South Dakota Searchlight reporters also encountered Doeden supporters Tuesday at the polls.

Kris Kluver, 47, of rural Sioux Falls, described Doeden as an "outsider who can bring a different perspective." Kluver said he previously voted for state House Speaker Jon Hansen, who finished fourth in the primary.

Dawn Geerdes, 58, of Brandon, voted for Doeden in the primary and the runoff and said Doeden "really wants to make South Dakota a good place."

"There wasn't anything that didn't appeal to me about Rhoden," Geerdes said. "Doeden just had more of what I was looking for. It was a tough race in my head and heart. I was going back and forth."

At a polling place in Pierre, 55-year-old Scott Isburg said he voted for Rhoden in the primary and the runoff. Isburg said he trusts that Rhoden will "run government in a way that'll actually work."

"I was a little bit concerned with some of the potential policies from Toby, whether they would work or not," Isburg said.

South Dakota Searchlight's Meghan O'Brien, Joshua Haiar and Makenzie Huber contributed to this report.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Courts issue conflicting rulings on Trump executive order restricting vote-by-mail

BY JACOB FISCHLER

A federal appeals court ruled Tuesday that the federal government can continue implementing President Donald Trump's executive order limiting vote-by-mail, reaching the opposite conclusion that another appeals panel decided over the weekend.

The conflict appeared to make it even more clear the issue will have to be settled by the U.S. Supreme Court, which already has been asked for its opinion on Trump's sweeping order that would have a huge impact on states just a little more than three months before the midterm elections.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit said Tuesday the executive order, which directs the U.S. Postal Service to collect from states lists of eligible voters who intend to vote by mail at least two months before an election and the Department of Homeland Security to compile lists of voting-age citizens in each state, can proceed because the agencies have not yet written rules implementing the order.

A D.C. trial judge in May denied several voting rights groups' request to block the order, saying the groups had not yet been harmed.

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Judges Patricia Millett and Robert Wilkins, who were appointed by President Barack Obama, and Gregory Katsas, whom Trump appointed, affirmed the decision.

They wrote that the executive order, which Trump signed March 31, is not self-executing and specifically tells the USPS and DHS to write the prescribed rules in a way that is consistent with the federal laws the groups say the order violates.

"We affirm because, while Plaintiffs have identified a number of serious questions concerning the lawfulness of proposed actions if implemented on the threshold of the upcoming federal election, this case likely is unripe for review in its present posture," they wrote.

Their order directly contradicts a ruling the U.S. 1st Circuit Court of Appeals published Saturday in a case brought by Democratic officials from 23 states and the District of Columbia.

That opinion held that states would be harmed if the order was allowed to proceed because state elections officials would immediately have to shift significant resources to prepare to meet the order's requirements, even without final rules from USPS or DHS.

The Trump administration appealed that ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the justice assigned to the 1st Circuit, requested briefs on whether the court should hear the case by Aug. 3.

In a social media post, the voting rights legal group Democracy Docket, which is not affiliated with the case, called Tuesday's ruling "a loss for voters" and said the administration under it could build a citizenship roster and withhold mail-in ballots from states that do not share citizenship data.

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

Flap over noncitizens on state voter rolls seen as unlikely to boost SAVE America Act

Majority Leader Thune says it's up to Trump to persuade wavering senators

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN

WASHINGTON — Suddenly there's evidence that noncitizens were on voting rolls in New Jersey, and there are new questions about the credibility of Alaska's voter data. Republicans say that's a big deal and an important boost for their so-far stuck election integrity drive.

But look more closely. Congressional lawmakers and independent experts said this week none of those disclosures are enough to give a meaningful boost to the Trump administration's relentless quest to purge noncitizens from voter rolls.

New Jersey found 6,600 noncitizens on its voter rolls in 2023 and 2024, with less than 400 actually voting. Alaska officials are raising questions about a few thousand voters, though it hasn't proven they were not entitled to vote. President Donald Trump won Alaska in 2024 by 44,000 votes.

"The answer is no," said David Becker, executive director of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research, when asked if the news would boost support for the SAVE America Act.

"They simply don't have the votes in the Senate," Becker said. "Even if it did pass, we're less than three months from the election."

The House passed the SAVE America Act in April, and last week it approved legislation that would give states \$10 billion to tighten election laws.

But any effort to advance those measures is stuck in the Senate, where most measures will need 60 votes to overcome a filibuster. The Senate has 53 Republicans, but not all support the Trump plan.

Majority Leader John Thune saw a difficult path forward.

The South Dakota Republican said Monday it was up to Trump to persuade wavering senators to go along. "If he can change the facts and start moving some of those senators from nos to yeses, then we'll have a different conversation. It's just the reality," Thune told reporters.

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The SAVE America Act, arguably Trump's top legislative priority this year, would require voters to show proof of citizenship when they register and a photo ID when they vote. Noncitizens are already barred from voting in state, federal and almost all local elections.

New Jersey, Alaska problems

What triggered the latest Republican drive was New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill's disclosure last week that about 6,600 noncitizens had been registered to vote in the state because of a software problem with the state Motor Vehicle Commission automatic voter registration system.

About 400 actually voted. Sherrill said the mistake began in 2023 and took a year to fix. She said there was no evidence it affected election results. Sherrill took office in January 2026.

"It's unacceptable that the vendor released software with such a glaring error. It's unacceptable that the MVC took a year to get this issue fixed, and it's unacceptable that no one, in the previous administration, brought this to light, demanded accountability," she said, the New Jersey Monitor reported.

Alaska last week also reported problems with its Division of Motor Vehicles registration. Officials said the state has removed 3,048 people from its voter rolls, saying they may not be citizens.

Carol Beecher, Division of Elections director, told state lawmakers that someone identified as a noncitizen should contact her agency and say whether or not they are a citizen, the Alaska Beacon reported.

"It is not an onerous request from the division to simply contact us and confirm, and that is what we have asked them to do. We don't require paperwork. We're not requiring documentation. Nothing like that," she said.

Motor voter law

The federal motor voter law of 1993 had largely been regarded as a bipartisan success, a way of making it easier for people to register to vote.

It requires that states offer registration at their motor vehicle agencies, including by mail. Applications for registration must be included in renewals and new applications for a drivers' license.

The 1993 law applies to 44 states and Washington, D.C. Idaho, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming are exempt because when the law took effect, they had no registration requirements or had same-day election registration at polling places.

A 2002 law requires voters to show identification, usually a driver's license, before they can register.

Noncitizens cannot vote in federal or state elections, but they can apply for driver's licenses.

It's unclear exactly why noncitizens showed up on New Jersey and possibly Alaska vote lists. Was it a software glitch? Were officials lax? Is there a problem other states should be aware of?

"We don't know a lot about this yet," said Becker.

Proof of fraud?

The Trump administration claimed earlier this month that as many as 250,000 noncitizens were registered to vote in New Jersey, California, Pennsylvania and Nevada.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said as many as 35,152 "potential noncitizens" may be registered to vote in New Jersey.

No concrete evidence supporting that number has surfaced, and voting rights analysts have raised questions about how that number was calculated.

To SAVE Act supporters, the New Jersey and Alaska disclosures last week were — finally — solid proof things were going wrong. Since the disclosures, there have been these developments:

The Justice Department wants the names and other information for those improperly registered. Sherrill said she won't release the data.

U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, a New Jersey Republican who heads a House Judiciary subcommittee, and 18 other House Republicans sent a letter to Sherrill demanding details about what happened. They want to know by Aug. 21 why the state failed to identify the error, and why it took so long. "New Jersey should end automatic voter registration at the Motor Vehicle Commission, clean up its voter rolls, and require proof of citizenship to register to vote. These are basic safeguards that should already be in place," Van Drew said in a statement.

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Trump and some Republicans called for the Senate to stay in session. Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, wants to keep senators in Washington past the start of their summer recess late next week so they can work on election reform. "The Senate doesn't need a summer vacation as much as the country needs the SAVE America Act. Let's cancel recess," he tweeted Sunday. Joining him was Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., and Jim Banks, R-Ind.

Republicans blamed Democrats. On the Senate floor, Senate Majority Whip John Barrasso, R-Wyo., tied the mess to Democratic views on undocumented immigrants. "Democrats can't throw open the borders, hand illegal immigrants driver's licenses, and then pretend to be shocked-shocked (as) Democrats claim to be when these illegal immigrants end up voting. Illegal immigrants must not be allowed to vote in American elections," he said.

Democrats scoffed at such rhetoric.

"Give it up, Donald. The SAVE Act ain't going to happen," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., in a floor speech this week aimed at Trump.

To Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, a senior Senate Judiciary Committee member, the situation is tinged with sadness.

"It all creates more suspicion there are problems with the voting rolls. I'm sure there are on an anecdotal basis," he said of the New Jersey news. "The more you cast the validity of the voting system in doubt it discourages more people from participating."

Asked if the revelations changed any Senate votes on the SAVE America Act, he said flatly, "No."

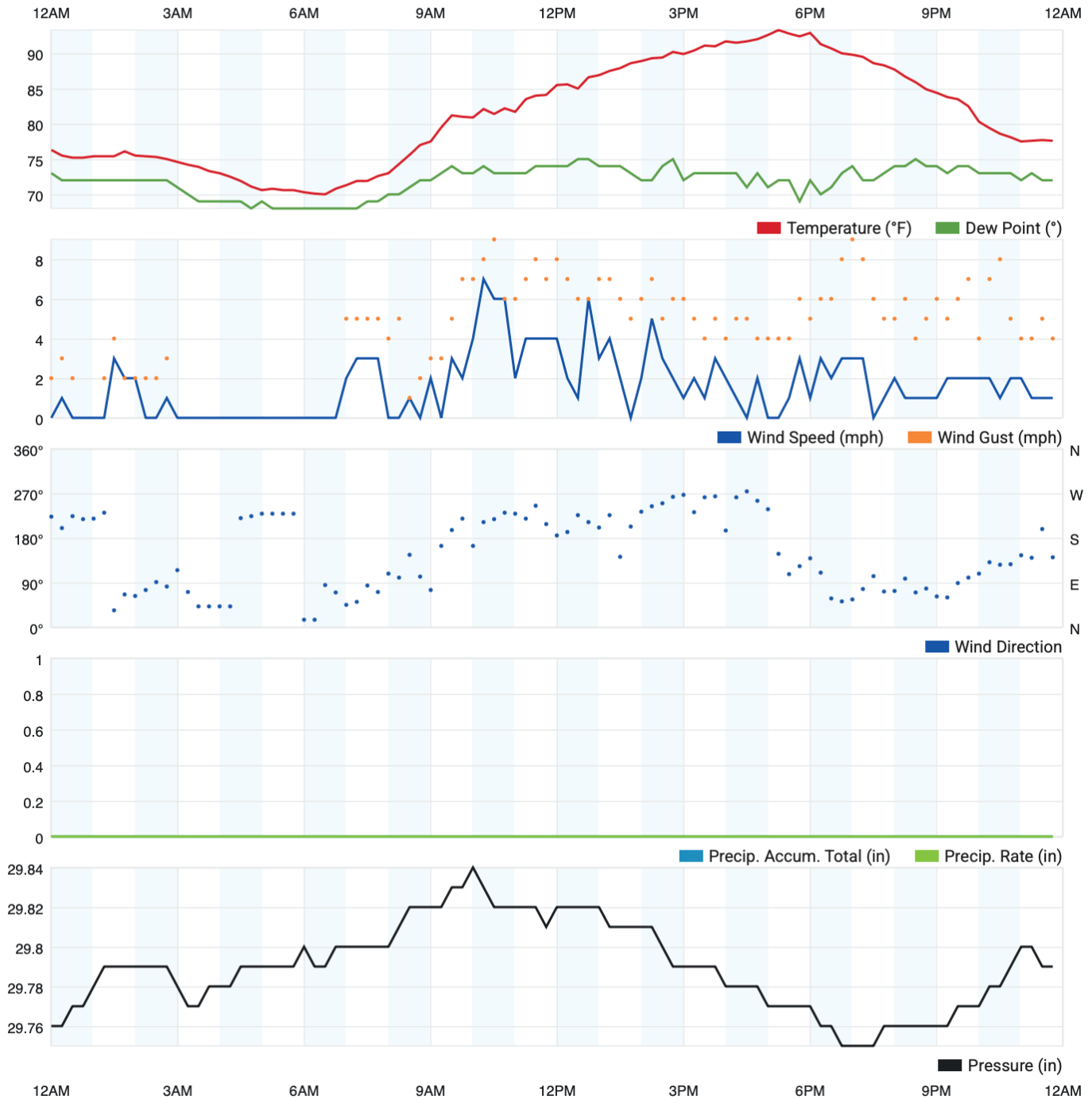
David Lightman has been a reporter or editor for more than 50 years. He's worked for the Hagerstown (Md.) Morning Herald, Riverside (Calif.) Press Enterprise, and then 10 years at the Baltimore Evening Sun, covering local news and, for six years, state government and the legislature. He spent 23 years 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.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 28, 2026



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Today



High: 92 °F

Patchy Smoke

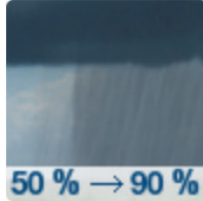
Tonight



Low: 69 °F

Patchy Smoke
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Thursday



High: 82 °F

Chance
Showers then
Showers

Thursday
Night



Low: 62 °F

Showers
Likely

Friday



High: 82 °F

Mostly Sunny



HOT TODAY!

Highs 90 - 102°

Heat Advisory for much of
central SD, with heat index
values of 98 - 102°

Looking ahead...



Highs in the 80s **Thursday**,
under a cloudy sky with
showers & thunderstorms.



STAY SAFE IN SUMMER HEAT



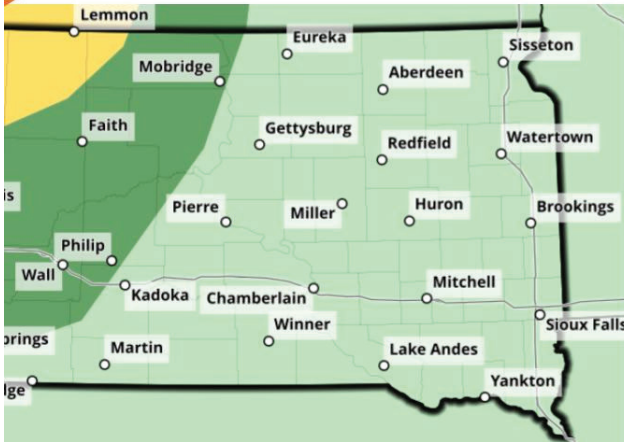
Today will be hot with temperatures rising into the 90s to 102 degrees. The hot and humid conditions will result in heat index values of 98 to 102 degrees over much of central South Dakota this afternoon, where a Heat Advisory is in effect. Stay safe this afternoon by taking frequent breaks from the summer heat, drinking plenty of water, and watching for signs of heat illness. There is also a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) of severe weather late this evening into the overnight hours across portions of north central South Dakota (mainly Corson and Dewey Counties). Looking ahead to Thursday, highs will be in the 80s under a cloudy sky with showers and thunderstorm. There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) of severe weather Thursday afternoon and evening.

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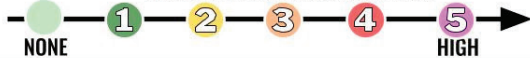
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SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS POSSIBLE this LATE TONIGHT



SEVERE THUNDERSTORM RISK



What To Do?

- Be ready to take shelter indoors when storms approach



CAMPING OR OTHER OUTDOOR PLANS?
STAY WEATHER AWARE



SEEK AN INDOOR SHELTER IF STORMS NEAR

National Weather Service • Aberdeen, SD weather.gov/abr

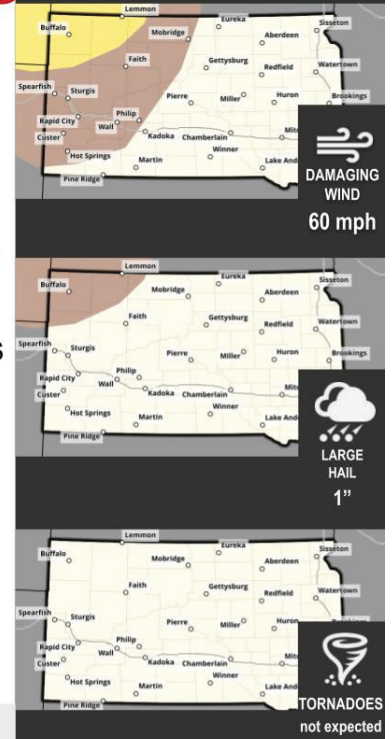
TIMING

10 PM into the overnight hours

What to Expect

- Isolated storms over portions of north central SD late this evening into the overnight hours
- A couple storms could become severe with damaging winds to 60 mph being the main concern

SEVERE THREAT RISKS



THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
ISOLATED severe storms possible

TIMING

Thursday Afternoon
into Thursday Evening

PRIMARY THREAT



DAMAGING WIND
of 60-70 mph

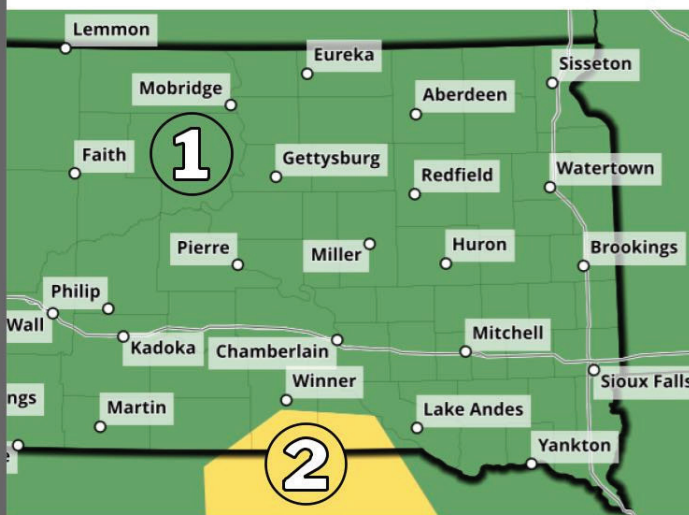
SECONDARY THREATS



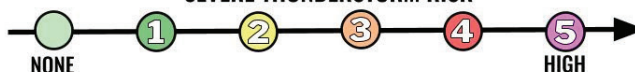
LARGE HAIL up
to 1 inch



BRIEF HEAVY
RAIN



SEVERE THUNDERSTORM RISK



National Weather Service • Aberdeen, SD weather.gov/abr

Isolated SEVERE STORMS Thursday

What To Expect

- Off and on showers & storms through the day
- Highest chance of a isolated strong to severe storms Thursday afternoon into Thursday evening
- Strong winds will be the main concern

What To Do?

- Stay Weather Aware!
- Be ready to take shelter indoors when storms approach
- Have multiple ways to receive warnings



MULTIPLE WAYS TO
RECEIVE WARNINGS



OUTDOOR PLANS?
STAY WEATHER AWARE



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 94 °F at 5:18 PM

Low Temp: 70 °F at 6:10 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 10:23 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1933

Record Low: 42 in 2014

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.93

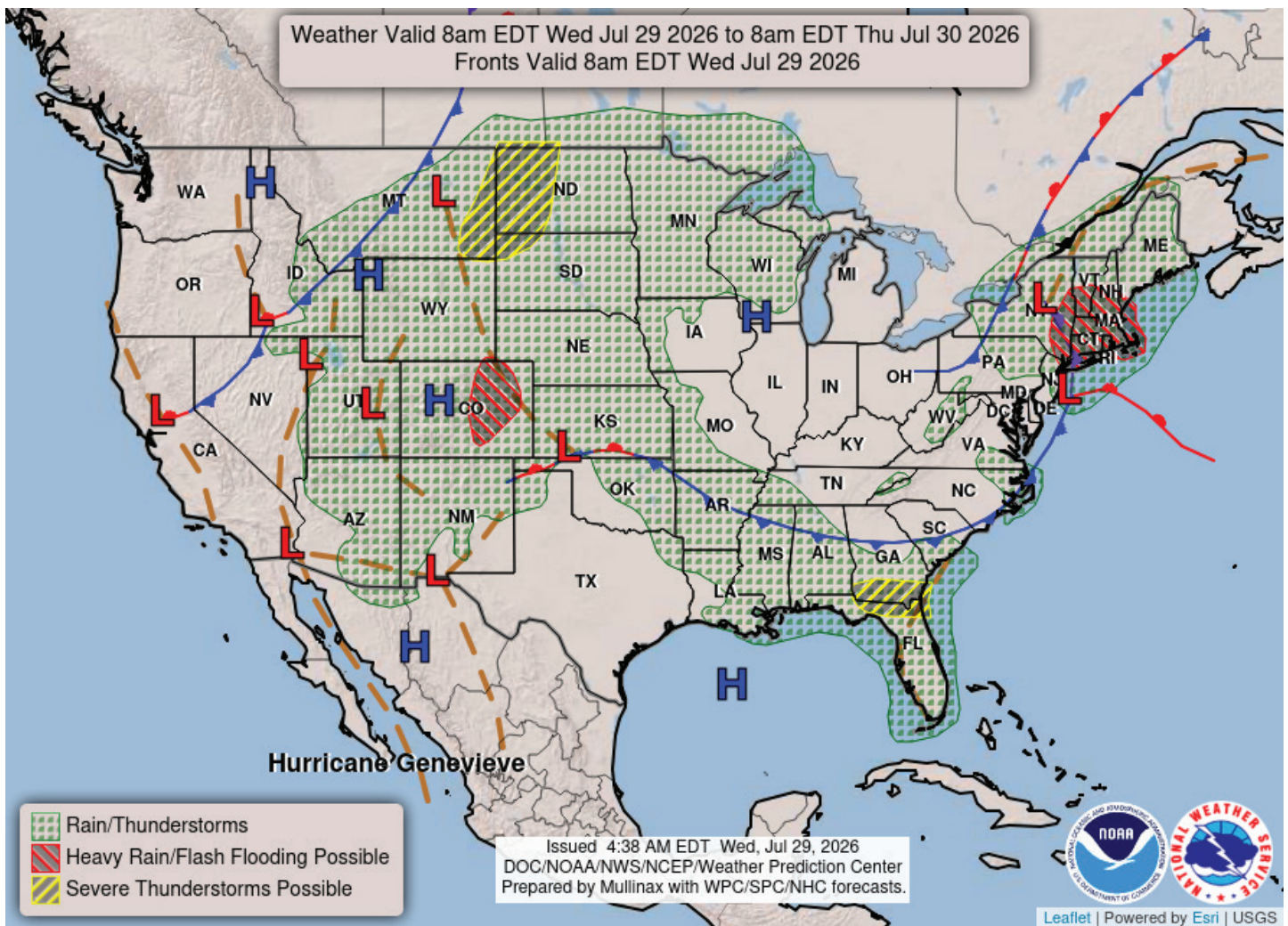
Precip to date in July.: 6.13

Average Precip to date: 13.94

Precip Year to Date: 15.60

Sunset Tonight: 9:04 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:14 am



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Today in Weather History

July 29, 1896: A destructive hailstorm originated in the central part of Edmunds County near Ipswich, passing southeast. This storm destroyed crops and broke glass in many windows along a path to the eastern portions of Spink County.

July 29, 2003: Winds of 70 mph, to over 100 mph caused damage in and around Redfield east to Frankfort and south to Tulare. The winds and hail damaged many roofs, crops, outbuildings, downed power lines, and poles, and also downed many branches and trees. In Redfield, a trailer home with two occupants was rolled three to four times over 75 feet. The trailer home rolled over a pickup truck and damaged it. Much of the contents in the trailer home were damaged, and the trailer home itself was a total loss. The people inside the home received minor injuries. A garage was also blown apart in Redfield with the car damaged inside. At the grain elevator in Redfield, several vehicle windows were broke out by airborne sand and rocks. A street light was ripped from the concrete in Redfield. East of Redfield, a 70-foot silo of over 70 tons was crumbled to the ground, and a large tractor shed was blown apart with damage to the contents. Wind equipment by Redfield measured winds at 106 mph before the power went out.

July 29, 2006: Record heat and high humidity affected central, north central, and northeast South Dakota for the end of July. Heat indices rose to 105 to 115 degrees across the area. Record high temperatures were set at Pierre, Mobridge, Kennebec, Timber Lake, and Aberdeen. Pierre rose to 111 degrees on each of the three days. Mobridge rose to 111 degrees on the 28th and 112 degrees on the 30th. Several record highs of 108 and 109 degrees were set at Timber Lake and Kennebec in the three-day period. Aberdeen set a record high of 106 on the 30th.

1898 — The temperature at Prineville, OR, soared to 119 degrees to establish a state record, which was tied on the 10th of August at Pendleton. (The Weather Channel)

1905 — Heavy rain in southwestern Connecticut caused a dam break, and the resulting flood caused a quarter of a million dollars damage at Bridgeport. As much as eleven inches of rain fell prior to the flood. (David Ludlum)

1958: The U.S. Congress passes legislation establishing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a civilian agency responsible for coordinating America's activities in space.

1960: Severe thunderstorms brought damaging winds, possibly as high as 100 mph to central Oklahoma. Eight planes and several hangars were damaged at Wiley Post Airfield, while two aircraft and additional hangars were damaged at Will Rogers World Airport. The winds caused seven injuries in the area, including two youths who were injured by flying debris.

1981 — Fifty cattle, each weighing 800 pounds, were killed by lightning near Vance, AL. The lightning struck a tree and then spread along the ground killing the cattle. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Minnesota to Indiana and Illinois. A thunderstorm at Janesville, WI, produced wind gusts to 104 mph which flipped over two airplanes, and blew another plane 300 feet down the runway. The northeastern U.S. experienced some relief from the heat. Nine cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Saint Johnsbury, VT, with a reading of 42 degrees. Barnet, VT, reported a morning low of 33 degrees, with frost reported on vegetation. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hail three inches in diameter was reported south of Saint Cloud, MN. Hot weather prevailed in the western U.S. Fresno, CA reported a record thirteen straight days of 100 degree heat. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Morning thunderstorms in the Upper Midwest produced more than five inches of rain west of Virgil, SD. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms deluged the foothills and adjacent plains of Colorado with heavy rain. Rains of six to seven and a half inches fell in eight hours north of Greeley. Hail and heavy rain caused several million dollars damage in Weld County. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2004: A record-setting flash flood occurred over part of the Greenville, South Carolina, during the morning hours. Six to eight inches of rain fell just east of Berea, a northwestern suburb, which caused the Reedy River through downtown Greenville crested 9 feet above flood stage. This crest was the highest level since 1908.



The Promise of God's Presence

When we feel helpless or incapable, His presence reassures us that we're right where we need to be..

Exodus 3:10-17: 10 "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

16 "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.

17 "So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

At times God gives us seemingly impossible tasks. On receiving his call to confront Pharaoh and lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses' immediate response was, "Who am I?" (Ex. 3:11). He saw his inadequacies clearly—a fugitive with a shepherd's staff, tasked with challenging the most powerful ruler in the world.

God's response was clear: "Certainly I will be with you" (v. 12). This wasn't a strategy for success or a promise to make the task easier. It was God saying His presence would be enough.

We often look for God to remove obstacles, increase our abilities, or provide a clear path forward when He calls us to difficult things. But sometimes God's answer is simply, "I will be with you."

When Moses questioned further, God revealed Himself as "I AM WHO I AM," the eternal, self-existent One who needs nothing and lacks nothing (vv. 14-15). This is the God who promises His presence—not offering guidance from afar but walking alongside us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

The gift isn't just that God helps us accomplish hard things. The gift is God Himself. His presence doesn't always change our circumstances, but it does change everything about how we face them.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.28.26

13 29 42 53 54 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 58
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.28.26

34 48 49 59 70 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 13
Mins 58 Secs

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LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.27.26

15 20 27 45 46 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,200,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 28 Mins 58
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.26

4 8 28 33 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 43 Mins 58
Secs

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POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.27.26

17 25 59 61 69 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 12 Mins 59
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.27.26

6 26 46 58 65 25

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$663,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 12 Mins 59
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

World shares are mixed and South Korea's Kospi share index falls 6%, while oil prices surge

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — World shares were mixed while South Korea's Kospi stock index dropped 6% Wednesday as doubts over massive investments in artificial intelligence once again led investors to dump chipmakers' shares.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX lost 0.4% to 25,357.69, while the CAC 40 in Paris skidded 0.8% to 8,395.21. Britain's FTSE 100 edged 0.1% lower to 10,865.48.

The future for the S&P 500 gained 0.2% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was little changed.

The latest rout in Seoul was led by a plunge in shares in chipmaker SK Hynix after its operating profit in the last quarter fell short of analysts' forecasts even though it soared nearly sixfold.

The Kospi fell more than 8% earlier in the day, but closed 6% lower, at 5,663.24. The benchmark only recently had topped 9,000 before bouncing back down to its lowest level since early April.

SK Hynix sank 9.4% while shares in Samsung Electronics dropped 4.8%.

Markets have been stricken by spates of selling of AI-related stocks as investors react to various developments including progress in China toward cheaper, advanced AI models.

Elsewhere in Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 1.5% to 61,434.19, giving up early gains. Shares in chipmaking equipment maker Tokyo Electron sank 10.6% and chip measuring and inspection systems maker Lasertec Corp. fell 8.3%.

Japanese stocks were mixed in their reaction to a major earthquake that rattled the southern Kyushu region a day earlier. A previous earthquake in the region caused severe damage and disruptions for automakers and other manufacturers.

Shares in Nippon Paper, owner of a mill in the disaster zone that was severely damaged by Tuesday's quake, fell 2.1%.

Taiwan's Taiex shed 3.8%.

The Shanghai Composite index reversed early losses to pick up 0.4%. It closed at 3,830.02.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 2% to 25,807.92.

In Australia the S&P/ASX 200 added 1% to 9,038.60 after the government reported that inflation has remained moderate, relieving pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates.

India's Sensex added 1.1%.

In other trading, oil prices that had eased from the two-month high that they hit last week rebounded as a brief pause in fighting in the Iran war was shattered. Jordan's air defenses intercepted five missiles launched from Iran early Wednesday, the country's military said, hours after the U.S. military said it had knocked down an Iranian missile barrage launched against American forces in the Middle East.

The calm persisted for about three days following weeks of escalation over the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf waterway and narrow chokepoint through which 20% of the world's traded oil normally flows.

Brent crude, the international standard, jumped 3.3% to \$84.77 a barrel.

Benchmark U.S. crude gained 3.4% to \$81.93 a barrel.

On Tuesday, shares were mixed on Wall Street.

The S&P 500 added 0.2% and the Dow industrials jumped 1%. The Nasdaq composite slipped 0.2%.

The majority of U.S. stocks rose after more companies delivered stronger profits for the spring than analysts expected. Coca-Cola climbed 5% after its revenue rose 7%.

Expectations for stellar earnings reports are weighing particularly heavily on stocks of chipmakers and other companies that have been huge winners from the boom in artificial-intelligence technology.

Micron Technology's stock came into the day having more than tripled for the year following gangbuster

growth, but its shares sank 8.9%.

Other tech companies helping to keep the market in check were Advanced Micro Devices, down 8.1%, and Applied Materials, down 7.8%.

In currency trading early Wednesday, the U.S. dollar slipped to 163.54 Japanese yen from 163.81 yen. The euro cost \$1.1395, up from \$1.1391.

Jordan intercepts Iranian missiles as US and Saudi Arabia launch strikes against militias in Iraq

By SAMY MAGDY and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Jordan's air defenses intercepted five missiles launched from Iran early Wednesday, the country's military said, hours after the U.S. military said it had knocked down an Iranian missile barrage launched against American forces in the Middle East, shattering a brief pause in fighting.

The Jordanian military said the missiles had been "intercepted and destroyed." Iran's state-run IRNA news agency carried a statement from the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard saying the Guard's Aerospace Force fired ballistic missiles at the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base and the headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command in Jordan.

The renewed hostilities sent oil prices spiking. Brent crude, the international standard, jumped 3.1% to \$84.58 a barrel.

Hours earlier, the U.S. Central Command said its forces "remain vigilant and at a high state of readiness," and that they had also worked with Saudi Arabia's forces to strike sites in Iraq that Tehran-backed militias have used to launch attacks in recent days.

In announcing the strikes in Iraq, the U.S. warned that further attacks on American troops or Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure risked additional action.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi called an emergency meeting of the country's National Security Council Wednesday to discuss the strikes.

The United States and Iran had experienced a period of calm, during which neither announced attacks for about three days following weeks of escalation over the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf waterway and narrow chokepoint through which 20% of the world's traded oil normally flows.

The fighting flared at the end of a month packed with multiple pressure points on U.S. President Donald Trump. In recent weeks, four U.S. troops died during the fighting, while the Pentagon asked an increasingly skeptical Congress for money to cover the conflict's ballooning costs.

Iran rejects Oman proposal for managing Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz has been a major flashpoint in the conflict. Iran's deputy foreign minister said his country rejected a proposal by Oman, which lies on the other side of the strait, for jointly managing ship traffic through the critical waterway.

In an interview with Iran's state-run television that aired Tuesday night, Kazem Gharibabadi said the Omani proposal included dividing the strait into two routes, each allowing the transit of 50% of shipping passing through the waterway.

The proposal failed to address Tehran's concerns and Iran offered a counterproposal with a temporary plan for transit of vessels through Iran's territorial waters, he said, adding that Iran's policy is for the strait "never to return to its prewar situation." Before the conflict, ships transited freely through the waterway.

Saudi Arabia and US strike Iran-backed militias in Iraq

"U.S. and Saudi fighter aircraft struck multiple terrorist logistics and weapons sites across eastern Iraq in a strong response to over 30 IRGC-directed aerial drone attacks in the last 72 hours," U.S. Central Command said, using an acronym for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

It said the Revolutionary Guard "and its terrorist proxies must cease these attacks to avoid further U.S. military response."

The Saudi Defense Ministry acknowledged the strikes in a post on social media, warning that "the Kingdom emphasizes that it does not seek escalation but will respond to any aggression it faces."

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The Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of primarily Shiite, Iran-backed armed groups that is officially under the command of the Iraqi military, said in a statement that at least 20 fighters were killed and 32 others wounded in the overnight strikes on its sites in several parts of Iraq.

The groups making up the PMF joined in the fight against the Islamic State group after it seized large sections of Iraq in 2014.

In 2016, the Iraqi government designated PMF as an "independent military formation" within the Iraqi armed forces, but in practice the member militias have continued to operate with significant autonomy. Some of them have launched attacks on U.S. facilities.

Saudi Arabia says it shot down drones

Saudi Arabia said Tuesday that it shot down drones fired by Iran-backed militias in Iraq for a second day, while Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen claimed to have forced a Saudi oil tanker to turn around as part of their announced blockade of the kingdom.

Al-Zaidi, the Iraqi leader, ordered security agencies to investigate after the Saudis alleged a similar attack on Monday. The Iraqi military said the country is committed to "preventing Iraqi territory from being used as a route or launching point for any attack targeting brotherly or friendly countries."

The Iraqi militias have denied any role in the drone attacks. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iran-backed armed groups, called the Saudi claims "fabrications" and implied that Monday's attacks were carried out by the Houthis, who had themselves claimed to have attacked Saudi oil facilities.

Iranian state-run media says tankers hit in the Strait of Hormuz

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported Wednesday that the Revolutionary Guard's Navy claimed it had struck and stopped three oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. It said the strikes came after the vessels allegedly ignored repeated warnings and continued sailing along what it described as an "unsafe and illegal route." The report did not identify the tankers or the flags they were sailing under.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of any strikes on tankers in the Strait of Hormuz Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the Houthis claimed to have fired missiles at the Saudi oil tanker NCC Ghazal in the Red Sea, forcing it to turn back. There was no immediate comment from Saudi Arabia on the claim. Last week, the Houthis announced a blockade of Saudi shipping, putting another key Middle Eastern waterway — through the Bab el-Mandeb strait leading to the Red Sea — at risk.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Center said late Tuesday that a tanker reported hearing explosions while traveling in the southern Red Sea the previous day. It did not name the tanker but said the crew and vessel were safe. It did not report strikes against tankers in the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday.

The rebels fired on at least one Saudi tanker in the Red Sea last week.

Anthony Fauci again faces questions from Senate Republicans about pandemic origins

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. scientist who helped lead the nation's COVID-19 pandemic response, is set to face off — again — with a Republican senator probing the origins of the coronavirus.

Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky subpoenaed Fauci to appear before a Senate committee Wednesday. It's part of Paul's yearslong accusations that the now-retired infectious disease expert had lied about the pandemic, something Fauci has called "preposterous."

Leading up to the hearing, Paul released more than a thousand pages of Fauci's personal diary covering the pandemic years. Pointing to some notes about early efforts at understanding how the virus emerged, Paul wrote on the social media platform X that what Fauci "wrote privately and what he told the country are two different stories."

Some of the diary entries — including his uncertainty in the pandemic's earliest days as scientists around the world raced to understand the new virus and how best to curb it before vaccines could be created — already were reflected in Fauci's 2024 memoir and in interviews at the time.

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But they're likely to further inflame a partisan divide that, years after the pandemic, still makes Fauci a target of vitriol from people who blame him for mask mandates and other policies they believe infringed on their rights as hundreds of thousands of people were dying.

In an earlier letter to Paul, Fauci's attorneys called his allegations "absolutely baseless" and part of an "obsessive and groundless vendetta."

Scientists scrambled to Fauci's defense ahead of the unusual hearing — the second time the longtime National Institutes of Health scientist has been back before Congress to discuss pandemic origins since leaving the government in 2022. While the COVID-19 pandemic introduced him to millions of Americans, he talked the nation through numerous outbreaks over decades, including HIV, Ebola and the 2001 anthrax attacks, while advising seven presidents.

In a public letter, more than 150 infectious disease experts and other scientists wrote that "no credible evidence has been produced to support these absurd charges" and that they are "urging our elected representatives in Congress stop these witch-hunts."

The expected crux of Wednesday's hearing: whether NIH-funded research in China may have played any role in how the pandemic started.

Many scientists believe the virus most likely emerged in nature and jumped from animals to people, coming to light when it spread at a wildlife market in the Chinese city of Wuhan. There's no new scientific information supporting that the virus might instead have leaked from a laboratory, a theory Paul champions. A GOP-led subcommittee that studied the question in 2024 did not find any evidence linking Fauci to wrongdoing.

Fauci has long said publicly that he was open to both theories, but that there's more evidence supporting COVID-19's natural origins, the way other deadly viruses including coronavirus cousins SARS and MERS jumped into people.

Republicans also have accused Fauci of lying about whether his agency funded "gain of function" research — the practice of enhancing a virus in a lab to study its potential real-world impact — at a lab in Wuhan.

NIH for years gave grants to a New York nonprofit called EcoHealth Alliance that used some of the funds to work with a Chinese lab studying coronaviruses commonly carried by bats. But the definition of "gain of function" covers both general research and especially risky experiments to "enhance" the ability of potentially pandemic pathogens to spread or cause severe disease in humans. Fauci has previously stressed he was using the risky experiment definition and that "it would be molecularly impossible" for those bat virus experiments to have turned into the pandemic virus.

The Trump administration last year paused some federally funded gain-of-function research and on Tuesday announced new rules to tighten oversight.

US bans foreign-made humanoid robots, targeting China over national security

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — The U.S. Federal Communications Commission is banning imports of new foreign-made humanoid robots and power inverters, citing national security risks, in a move that targets China.

The measures are likely to test relations with Beijing ahead of a planned U.S. visit by Chinese leader Xi Jinping to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump in September. China dominates the global market for humanoid robots with an estimated market share of roughly 85%.

The FCC's ban also includes new imports of quadruped robots — often referred to as four-legged robot dogs. The agency said imports of advanced robots pose cybersecurity and other national security risks. Offshore production of such equipment also leaves U.S. supply chains vulnerable to disruptions.

The ban on power inverters, which are used to convert direct current (DC) electricity into alternating current (AC) electricity and are used in renewable energy systems, data centers and household appliances, could have sweeping ramifications.

FCC chairperson Brendan Carr said Tuesday that the move was to "secure America's critical supply chains."

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He said the bans apply to "new versions" of such imports.

The FCC's bans follow a slew of U.S. restrictions on imports of Chinese products, including drones, and on exports of U.S. advanced technology to China.

The U.S. is also weighing controls on use of Chinese open-source artificial intelligence models at a time when Chinese AI is rapidly gaining ground.

"It's a steady drumbeat of potential flashpoints heading into (the) Trump-Xi summit planned for September," said Samm Sacks, a senior fellow at the New America think tank focused on Chinese technology policies.

China has been rapidly expanding use of robots, with policies supporting its technology sector. Morgan Stanley analysts forecast its market for humanoids could reach \$15 billion by 2030.

"Chinese manufacturers have been scaling production and reducing costs faster than most overseas competitors," said analyst Kangyuxiao Li at Morningstar.

"Restricting their access to the U.S. removes an important future market and protects U.S. developers from potential price competition," he said. "However, it will not materially slow China's overall humanoid development, given the size of its domestic manufacturing base and opportunities in other export markets."

Of the around 15,000 humanoid robots shipped globally in 2025, Unitree and AGIBOT, two of China's largest advanced robotics companies, each shipped more than 5,000. Their U.S. counterparts, like Tesla and Figure AI, each shipped a few hundred or less, according to the technology research and advisory group Omdia.

China's Foreign Ministry hit back at the U.S. move, accusing Washington of overstretching the concept of national security to suppress Chinese companies.

China will take "all measures necessary" to defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese businesses, it said.

"Protectionism does not make the U.S. more competitive, and it will only hurt the interests of U.S. companies and consumers," Mao Ning, a ministry spokesperson, told reporters at a regular press conference Wednesday in Beijing.

The new bans could also potentially interfere with collaborations between U.S. and Chinese technology companies, said Lian Jye Su, a chief analyst at Omdia.

Nvidia, for example, in June revealed a humanoid robot reference design which uses the humanoid chassis of China's Unitree.

The Pentagon recently included Unitree and several other major Chinese technology companies on its list of firms that it said have ties to or aid the Chinese military. Beijing has rejected that claim.

Russia charges Telegram founder Pavel Durov with aiding terrorism and puts him on wanted list

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

Russia's main domestic security agency said Wednesday that Pavel Durov, founder and owner of the messaging app Telegram, has been charged with aiding terrorism and put on an international wanted list.

The charges against Durov, who was born and began his career in Russia but later moved abroad, came as the Russian authorities restrict Telegram, one of the most popular messaging apps in the country. It is part of a long-term effort to bring the internet under the Kremlin's full control that has intensified since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Federal Security Service, also known as the FSB, accused Telegram's administration in a statement of failing to remove "numerous channels, chats and bots" that are "actively used by Ukrainian intelligence agencies, terrorist, and extremist organizations to prepare and coordinate acts of sabotage and terrorism, mass murder, and cyberfraud" in Russia, which resulted in "numerous human casualties."

The agency accused Ukrainian security services of using a popular dating chatbot on Telegram to lure and recruit Russians for "sabotage and terrorist activities," and said 46 users of the chatbot, from 12 to

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22 years old, have been detained across Russia since July 2025 for assaulting law enforcement officers, arson and other acts.

Durov earlier this year announced that the Russian authorities opened a criminal investigation against him and accused them of fabricating pretexts to restrict access to Telegram as part of an attempt to “suppress the right to privacy and free speech.”

If convicted, the entrepreneur could face up to life in prison in Russia.

Telegram did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Its official website says that the company is based in Dubai and that Durov, who holds dual citizenship of France and the United Arab Emirates, lives there, too.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russian authorities have engaged in multipronged efforts to rein in the internet. They have adopted restrictive laws and banned websites and platforms that don’t comply and focused on improving technology to monitor and manipulate online traffic.

Multiple popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and X, have been banned in Russia; YouTube has been throttled; popular messaging apps, such as Signal and Viber, have been blocked, and the most popular ones — WhatsApp and Telegram — have been restricted.

Russia’s popular Facebook-like social media platform VK, founded by Durov long before he launched the Telegram messaging app, had come under the control of Kremlin-friendly companies. Russia tried to block Telegram between 2018-20 but failed.

While it’s still possible to circumvent some of the restrictions by using virtual private network services, many of them are routinely blocked, too.

At the same time, Russia actively promotes the “national” messaging app known as MAX, which critics say could be used for surveillance. The platform is touted by developers and officials as a one-stop shop for messaging, online government services, making payments and more. It openly declares it will share user data with authorities upon request, and experts also say it doesn’t use end-to-end encryption.

Durov has faced criminal investigations elsewhere. In 2024, he was arrested in Paris over allegations that his platform was being used for illicit activity, including drug trafficking and the distribution of child sexual abuse images. Durov said in March 2025 that he returned to Dubai after spending “several months” in France.

The Kremlin at the time criticized the French authorities for their move against Durov as “selective.”

“I know that many countries have raised concerns about the platform being used in certain ways by certain individuals and entities whose activities could harm the economy or security of certain countries. I think the Russian government might also have had some questions,” Putin said in September 2024, after Durov’s arrest.

“But all platforms of this kind are guilty of this. If this is what they’re doing to Durov, then others should probably be arrested,” the Russian leader said, adding that the French government’s “actions are not entirely clear to me, as they are selective.”

This Lebanese couple is among those returning to shattered homes under US-brokered deal with Israel

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

ZAWTAR AL-GHARBIEH, Lebanon (AP) — Mahasen Faqih and her husband returned this week to their village in southern Lebanon, digging through the debris of their home in search of their belongings, as part of the U.S.-brokered “pilot zones” agreement in which Israel agreed to withdraw in exchange for the disarmament of the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group.

The couple fled north shortly after the start of the latest Israel-Hezbollah war, in early March. Now, their home in Zawtar al-Gharbieh — one of three zones where Israel agreed to turn over control to the Lebanese army — is among homes so damaged that they’re unlivable. But Faqih said they’ve vowed to stay, settling inside the large grocery shop that they own in the village as they wait to have their home demolished and rebuilt.

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"Zawtar is our small homeland, and we are very happy," Faqih, 58, said. "We will sleep here to tell the Israelis that we will stay in our land and will not leave it, no matter what happens."

A week after the Lebanese army took control, only about 15 families have returned, according to Mayor Abed Ezzeldine, who says nearly half the village's 500 homes have been destroyed and many others damaged.

Hezbollah is strongly opposed to the initial deal reached between Israel and Lebanon — which remain technically in a state of war since Israel's establishment in 1948 — and to the direct talks between the nations, ongoing for nearly three months.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war began March 2, when the Lebanese militant group fired rockets into Israel two days after Israel and the U.S. launched their war on Iran. Israel has since invaded Lebanon and occupied dozens of villages in the south along its border.

Under the deal, Israeli forces are supposed to withdraw from some occupied areas of southern Lebanon. But the location of the initial pilot zones generated some controversy in Lebanon. Israeli troops weren't present in most of the areas, raising questions about how a withdrawal could happen. In Zawtar al-Gharbieh, it's unclear whether troops were on the ground. But they were in adjacent areas, and the village was under heavy fire, preventing civilian residents and the Lebanese army from entering until last week.

The Israeli military has destroyed 24 centuries-old villages and 15,000 to 20,000 houses in Lebanon, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz told a TV station Tuesday. He said Israeli troops control 700 square kilometers (270 square miles) of southern Lebanon and "are preventing raids on the communities."

Residents return to damaged or destroyed homes in Zawtar al-Gharbieh

On Tuesday, as Faqih sifted through debris, she was able to recover only nine plates from the kitchen. That room and the main sitting room were knocked out, with the ceiling partially collapsed. On the home's other side, an Israeli strike left a hole in the main bedroom's ceiling.

"We are gathering what remains of what we have collected over 45 years," Faqih said, noting that she'd already sold \$20,000 in jewelry to repair the home from damage in the 2024 Israel-Hezbollah war — something she can no longer afford. She hopes the government will help them rebuild.

Mayor Ezzeldine said Zawtar al-Gharbieh is "disaster-stricken."

"You can see some homes standing, but they are not suitable for living and cannot be renovated," he said. The municipality is doing its best to bring water by tanker trucks to residents who return, he said, and he hopes about 100 families will be in the village by week's end.

Lebanese army bulldozers were clearing debris from the village's streets. In the main square, trucks with mounted machine guns were parked near a partially destroyed blue-domed mosque. About 100 meters (109 yards) away, an armored personnel carrier blocked a road leading to the adjacent village of Zawtar al-Sharqiyah, which is fully occupied by Israeli troops.

During The Associated Press team's visit Tuesday to Zawtar al-Gharbieh, three strong explosions occurred in occupied areas, and brown smoke billowed.

More Lebanon-Israel talks are scheduled next month

In his comments Tuesday to Channel 14, an ultranationalist station in Israel, Defense Minister Katz said that in the 24 villages destroyed in Lebanon, "there were Shiites who acted as enemies on behalf of Hezbollah and threatened our borders, our residents, and constantly carried out provocations."

"Not house by house, not incrimination — all these villages, their destruction has been completed," he said.

His comments and the return of some residents to the pilot zone come as technical teams from Lebanon and Israel are scheduled to hold another round of talks in Rome over three days starting Aug. 4.

In Beirut, a Lebanese foreign ministry official said the talks will focus on finding other pilot zones to be handed over by Israel's military to the Lebanese side. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

But in Zawtar al-Gharbieh, mayor Ezzeldine said he wouldn't call the pilot zone successful so far. Israeli troops are still stationed nearby, with drones continuously flying over the village, he said, adding that only the Lebanese army's presence is reassuring residents.

Faqih said that her family does not feel secure and that if Israel expands the pilot zones by a village every couple of months, it will take years "for it to withdraw and for the south to be liberated."

"We don't have safety, not even 1%," she said. "I am not happy with the situation at all."

Fringe Israeli settler group is sneaking into Syria to try to claim land for a Jewish outpost

By NATALIE MELZER, ABBY SEWELL and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

NAHARIYA, Israel (AP) — The Israeli military was about to launch a nighttime strike on a group of men in southern Syria when the soldiers noticed the long curls dangling from the temples of their targets. The troops held their fire.

These were not Syrian militants attempting to breach Israel's border but religious Jews who had slipped into Syria and were on their way back.

The episode, first reported last week by Israel's public broadcaster and confirmed to The Associated Press by the Israeli military, has helped raise the profile of a fringe group of Israeli settlers that has staged numerous incursions into Syria, where they hope to establish Jewish settlements.

Israel's military has occupied the area in southern Syria for more than a year, but the forays by civilian settler groups into the region only became a regular occurrence recently.

The groups, with members numbering in the dozens, have attempted to cross from Israel to Syria every few days in recent weeks. The military is tasked with reining them in and, while most Israelis regard them as fringe, the wider settlement movement in Israel has strong backers in the country's far-right government.

The most prominent of the groups behind the incursions in Syria is known as "Pioneers of Bashan."

Pioneers of Bashan are named after a biblical region

Formed early last year, the Pioneers of Bashan are a group of right-wing Israeli activists aiming to establish Jewish settlements inside Syria. They are named after the biblical region of Bashan, which includes part of modern-day Syria and neighboring Jordan.

They have their sights set on an area of southwestern Syria that includes the provinces of Quneitra, Daraa and Sweida.

Part of this area, including the summit of Mt. Hermon, is a "buffer zone" Israel declared in December 2024, soon after the ouster of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in an insurgent offensive.

The region was known in Scripture for its fertile land and came to be associated with strength and divine providence. In the Bible, the Israelites under Moses conquered the Bashan from the mythical King Og and it was then handed to some of the Israelite tribes.

Members of the group claim a historical right to these lands and argue that their presence there will help Israel defend the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria during the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed — a move not recognized by most of the international community.

Some claim that Israeli settlement of the areas would protect members of the Druze religious minority after violence erupted last year between Druze groups and Sunni Bedouin tribes and Syrian government security forces. Hundreds of civilians — mostly Druze — were killed in sectarian revenge attacks.

Amos Azaria, a Pioneers of Bashan leader, said the group aims to establish a "humanitarian corridor" from Israel to the Druze enclave of Sweida by depopulating adjacent Sunni-majority areas.

"The entire Daraa district ... must be cleared of the enemies seeking our destruction and instead be filled with Jewish settlement," said Azaria, a computer science professor at Ariel University in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The group aims to establish a Jewish outpost inside Syria

The group seeks first to establish a Jewish outpost in southern Syria next to the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Outpost, which means "young settlement" in Hebrew, is a term used by settlers to describe rustic footholds in territory they desire.

Settlers normally establish outposts in the hope that one day Israel's government will legalize them. That's how many Jewish settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank — which rights groups say are

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major drivers of settler violence and displacement of Palestinians — got their start.

So far their incursions into Syria have been brief. The military has removed the activists before they have been able to build anything.

Videos on the group's X account from July 5 show a group of religious teens seated on the ground with their arms linked together, as soldiers try to pry them apart.

A second video shows soldiers shoving several of the activists and zip tying their hands behind their backs.

A video posted by the group in April shows several dozen activists waving Israeli flags and chanting on the roof of a house said to be on the outskirts of the Syrian village of Hader, in Quneitra, as Israeli soldiers look on.

Israeli military says the group compromises its operations

Israel's military says it takes a firm hand with the border-crossers. It has repeatedly condemned the group for diverting troops' attention from military operations and compromising their security. It says it detains civilians caught crossing the border and hands them over to police, saying it "expects law enforcement authorities to bring those involved to justice."

Israel's Channel 12 reported last week that no indictments have been filed so far.

The border-crossers say they have cozy relationships with members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. Several government ministers have expressed support for their cause, and the group's social media platforms document meetings it has held with at least two cabinet ministers, Amihai Eliyahu and Shlomo Karhi.

"We have support from friends in the government and many members of the Knesset," Azaria said.

Syrian, Lebanese governments are more concerned about military occupation

Syrian officials have not commented publicly on the attempts by Israeli settler groups to enter Syria.

The Syrian government has condemned Israel's occupation of southern Syria and frequently calls for Israeli forces to withdraw and for the international community to intervene. Israeli troops have carried out incursions and raids in areas of Syria outside the buffer zone, sometimes clashing with local residents, who have increasingly attempted to block roads to keep them out.

The Lebanese government has also paid little attention to a fringe Israeli settler group — "Uri Tzafon," or "Awaken, O North" — that has staged incursions into southern Lebanon. Like Syrian officials, the Lebanese government has focused on calling for withdrawal of the Israeli army from southern Lebanon.

Still, some have warned against entirely discounting the settler groups.

Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri wrote on X of the attempts by the Uri Tzafon group to enter the country, "It is true that they are a small and fringe group and they withdrew under orders from the Israeli army."

But he pointed out that the movement to settle the West Bank began with an embattled band of right-wing religious activists, known as Gush Emunim, "which in its early days was a small group that faced some obstacles and difficulties."

Wildfires are more extreme in Europe and North America, but global burning is oddly decreasing

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

It seems as if the world is afire this summer. But even as wildfires in Europe and North America grow more extreme, key worldwide burning statistics are at a record low largely because Africa and Asia are controlling fire more.

Experts say these seemingly opposite trends are happening at the same time because of what humanity is doing to the planet.

"It does seem like a paradox because we're talking increases in fires, yet the global numbers have been going down and down. But they're both true," said fire scientist Mike Flannigan of Thompson Rivers University in Canada.

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Spain's wildfire is that country's largest on record at more than 193 square miles (500 square kilometers) while wildfires in Europe have burned just a bit under 2025's all-time high. In Canada and the United States this summer, land burned by wildfires is at least 25% higher than the 10-year average and more than double what it was decades ago, according to national wildfire centers. Entire chunks of the continent were choked by smoke, causing unhealthy air quality.

Fires are worsening in terms of size, intensity, speed and frequency, especially in the U.S., Canada and Europe, said University of Colorado fire scientist Jennifer Balch.

"Extreme wildfires are on the rise globally in different parts of the world. And that's the piece that you know has us shaking in our boots," Balch said.

Fires decrease in Africa, Asia

And yet the world went into July this year with record low global emissions from burning fires, a key measure of their prevalence, the European climate center Copernicus reported. That is because fires in Africa and Asia are way down due to changing agricultural practices, fire management and where people are moving to, said Mark Parrington, a senior scientist at Copernicus. Copernicus calculated that this year's carbon emissions from burning are the lowest since satellites first measured nearly 25 years ago — about half what they were in the early 2000s.

"Africa dominates the global fire activity," said UCLA water and fire scientist Park Williams. "So if there's a trend in Africa, then that's going to be the trend in the global fire activity. In sub-Saharan Africa, fire activity over the last 25 years has gone down pretty dramatically."

On average, more than three-quarters of the global emissions from the burning of plant material comes from Africa and Asia, Copernicus statistics show. Less than one-eighth comes from North America and Europe.

Traditionally, huge grassland fires on the African savanna burned each year, compared to more intermittent forest fires in other regions, influencing worldwide fire totals, said John Abatzaglou, a fire scientist at the University of California Merced. But with more land being used for housing and farming, humans are limiting savanna fires, while also creating barriers to prevent fires from spreading, he said.

In Asia and the Amazon fires are often used to clear land for agriculture, experts said. So, Williams said, "it really is all driven by human demographic change."

Human fingerprints on North American and European fire trends

In North America and Europe there are also "human fingerprints" on the more extreme fires dominating the news, but that is from climate change Abatzaglou said. Climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas is making it hotter and drier — ideal fire weather — five different experts told The Associated Press.

Hotter temperatures mean humans "have our foot on the gas pedal" for bigger fires, "but we also have lost the brakes on fire" because warmer and wetter nights don't give forests — or firefighters — time to recover during darkness like they used to, Balch said.

When it gets hotter, the atmosphere sucks more moisture out of the ground, making it drier and easier to burn, Flannigan said. Climate change also increases the length of the burning season across North America and especially in northern forests where there used to be only a few days when the weather was conducive to wildfires, but now there are a lot more, he said.

And when climate change makes fire more extreme in places with larger populations, it tends to have a greater impact by burning more valuable property, Flannigan said.

Abatzaglou said that North America has long done a good job of fire suppression. But with climate change making fires more intense and frequent, "we're losing our ability to do that," he said.

El Nino will add to fires

Fire activity is likely to get worse in the coming months because of the developing super strong El Nino. The weather pattern usually triggers more dangerous fires in the tropics, less so in the United States because of more rain, experts said. South American governments are already getting prepared.

"The most predictable outcome of El Nino is going to be more tropical fire, specifically tropical forests," Williams said.

Williams said El Nino could increase fires in the Amazon region, Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific.

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While El Nino means more rain and fewer forest fires in the U.S. West, it can also mean more grass growth in deserts that adds fuel for eventual grass fires, Abatzaglou said. Examples of devastating grass fires include Los Angeles in 2025 and Hawaii in 2023,

Regardless of El Nino, scientists said areas in North America and Europe will have to improve planning and adaptation for worsening wildfires, including prescribed burns to thin excess trees and grasses.

"It's not a question of whether our landscapes are going to burn, it's the question of when they're going to burn," Balch said.

A 2:47 a.m. alert, a rabbit and 220,000 evacuees as France's wildfire rages on

By EVA VAN DAM and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

BORDEAUX, France (AP) — The mobile phone alert message marked "URGENT" came with a beeeeeeeeep in the dead of night.

"Evacuate now," it said.

Suddenly awake, Morgane Bonichot scrambled. She grabbed her 9-year-old daughter, their rabbit and their dog but didn't think to pack underwear.

The 40-year-old childcare worker found herself swept up in one of the biggest evacuations Europe has seen since World War II, forced with more than 220,000 other people to flee a monster wildfire in southwest France that has consumed an area four times the size of Paris and is defying a massive effort, involving a dozen countries, to bring it under control.

In hindsight, Bonichot thinks maybe she should have seen it coming.

Her daughter was in the blaze's epicenter when it ignited last week, staying with an uncle in the midst of the pine forests, scrub and farmland being consumed by an inferno so virulent that it has morphed at times into a self-feeding firestorm, spitting lightning bolts that have sparked yet more flames.

Among the fire's first evacuees, the daughter came home Friday. But with the flames spreading closer to her mother's house west of Bordeaux, the daughter began preparing to flee again.

"She packed a suitcase with a lot of things, telling me, 'Mum, you need to pack your suitcase because we're going to have to be evacuated,'" Bonichot said.

Just hours later, at 2:47 a.m., she got the evacuation order for their town, Saint-Jean-d'Illac, on her phone.

"Forest fire underway," it said.

All told, regional authorities have emptied two dozen towns and villages, some ravaged by fire. Others between the blaze and Bordeaux, including Saint-Jean-d'Illac, were evacuated as a precaution by government officials who say their priority is making sure that no lives are lost.

After a pause in evacuations Monday, when the fire's spread stopped, they resumed Tuesday as flames flared again. An additional 4,000 people were moved from camping sites and holiday homes on the blaze's northern edge, increasing the number of people forced to flee: more than 220,000 in the Gironde region alone. In Spain, historic wildfires have also forced tens of thousands of evacuations, bringing the number displaced in southwest Europe to roughly a third of a million.

"We left just like that," Bonichot said. "My car had broken down, so neighbors had to drive me, along with my little girl and the animals. But one of the neighbors had a cat, and with the smell of the rabbit it became very complicated. So she had to drop me off."

After a few days staying with Bonichot's mother, they moved again, this time to a huge exhibition center in Bordeaux that city authorities have converted into a temporary shelter. It has camp beds, food, medical and veterinary services, clothes and volunteers doing what they can to make people comfortable.

The rabbit stays in a cage between the mother and daughter's beds and the dog curls up in a large bowl. After a couple of days in the makeshift conditions, "I'm starting to become really exhausted," Bonichot said.

But she doesn't want to go home until she's sure they won't be evacuated again.

"I just can't put my animals through another journey. The only trip they should have to make now is the

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one back home. Otherwise, for the rabbit, the stress could be fatal."

"And my dog was dehydrated," she said. "Here, there's air conditioning and everything, so for the moment he's doing a little better."

Gironde authorities have said evacuees won't be allowed back until the fire is contained, although on Tuesday they gave the go-ahead for returns to three suburbs of Bordeaux that haven't had fires. It's unknown when others might be allowed home. Fire trucks are still racing from one flare-up to the next, as aircraft drop water and retardant. Smoke clouds could be seen from kilometers away Tuesday.

Even when this inferno is beaten, the next one may not be far behind. Successive heat waves this year have turned European forests tinder-dry. They have also served as sobering reminders that human-caused climate change makes such extreme events increasingly likely.

"What really drives me crazy is that it makes me very worried about the future, because year after year it's getting worse," Bonichot said.

"It's going to be a catastrophe."

A new media ecosystem is taking root on the left, reshaping Democratic politics

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Farah Berent, a teacher in Michigan, used to learn about politics from channels like ABC, CBS and CNN. But that changed as she decided that coverage of the war in Gaza was irreparably biased.

"I couldn't stand all the lies on the stations," she said, arguing that there wasn't enough attention being paid to Palestinian suffering. "I started going to Instagram to get my news."

Berent is among many progressive-minded Americans who have sworn off legacy media institutions. They're turning to a widening mix of independent podcasts, social media accounts and digital news sites, part of an increasingly influential ecosystem that has boosted this year's wave of anti-establishment, left-leaning candidates who may not have gotten as much attention otherwise.

Liberals remain more likely than conservatives to trust mainstream outlets, but the splintering echoes how conservatives skeptical of their party created a collection of insurgent news sites years ago. The shift has elevated individual commentators with opinions on the news, some of whom have proven influential in driving people's votes.

Ryan Grim, a co-founder of Drop Site News and a veteran of online political debates, said progressive politicians have sought out his platform to reach voters. In a change from previous election cycles, "they have ways to get covered even if the mainstream just basically ignores them," he said.

One of those candidates is Abdul El-Sayed, who is running for U.S. Senate in Michigan and faces the more moderate U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens in the Aug 4. primary.

"I think in a lot of ways, where traditional media has been gatekeepers, we're watching that gatekeeping function fall away," El-Sayed said.

Anti-establishment media has grown for years, but exploded lately

These changes have been on display this year in places like New York City, where a slate of progressive congressional candidates endorsed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani defeated establishment-backed candidates.

Sara Hyler, a policy analyst in East Harlem, originally planned to support incumbent Rep. Adriano Espaillat in last month's Democratic primary. But then Hyler started learning about progressive outsider Darializa Avila Chevalier through YouTube videos and podcasts, including from the liberal media company MeidasTouch.

"My actual beliefs are to the left of Democrats. I don't want a moderate," said Hyler, who ultimately voted for Avila Chevalier in hopes she could help nudge Congress toward progressive policies.

The rise of independent media has been part of a digital transformation that transcends politics, as chronically online Americans are turning toward news from social media and content creators. But it's not just the popularity of smartphones driving that change.

"There's a complete lack of trust in any and all institutions now," said Mike Nellis, a Democratic consultant

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who hosts a podcast, writes a Substack and posts political analysis on social media. "That has led people to turn to individuals, and so now you're picking your flavor of person to listen to."

Among conservatives, faith in mainstream media and in the more moderate wing of the Republican Party faltered years ago, with the rise of the Tea Party movement paving the way for an alternative right-wing media ecosystem, including sites like the Daily Caller, Breitbart and The Blaze. Trump also tapped into a loose constellation of podcasts, including "The Joe Rogan Experience," for his successful comeback campaign.

Reece Peck, a media culture professor at the College of Staten Island, said the left-wing version of that has happened slowly, beginning with the momentum of Sen. Bernie Sanders' first presidential run in 2016. At the time, left-wing, anti-establishment YouTube accounts and podcasts like The Young Turks and Chapo Trap House were gaining attention but didn't reach the majority of Democratic voters.

Now Democrats have realized their faith in institutions didn't prevent Trump's return.

"The ground has been made fertile for an anti-establishment media politics, where it just wasn't quite there with the voter base in those previous cycles," Peck said. Even older, moderate liberals, he said, have started to "throw their hands in the air and look for alternatives."

YouTube accounts like "Secular Talk" and "Breaking Points," streamers like Hasan Piker and new digital journalism organizations like More Perfect Union and The Lever are among those that have seen their audiences multiply.

Grim said Drop Site has amassed 800,000 free and 60,000 paid subscribers since launching two years ago — more than he'd anticipated.

Saul Levin, a Michigan progressive organizer who recently started his own podcast about artificial intelligence data centers, said Trump's attacks on the existing media landscape are part of the reason for that growth.

"The investigations and raids on numerous different journalists, the appointment of specifically aligned billionaires to lead various major news agencies, is very troubling," he said. "Creators and new media outlets are stepping in and trying to fill gaps."

Alternative media has played a role in a closely watched Michigan primary

The Michigan primary will be the latest test of the evolving media ecosystem, which El-Sayed, a longtime podcaster himself, has tried to harness. Various progressive outlets, creators and organizers have aggressively promoted his campaign.

El-Sayed said the rise of independent media has let voters compare news across different channels and notice biases, but he doesn't turn down opportunities on legacy media, either.

"I go on Fox News, I go on podcasts, I Twitch stream, we have a YouTube channel," he said.

Stevens, who received endorsements from outgoing incumbent Sen. Gary Peters, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, has a more traditional approach. She's also backed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, and its affiliated groups, which have spent close to \$30 million on the race.

Stevens' campaign declined to comment for this story.

Reporting from progressive outlets has influenced how the race has unfolded. For example, Stevens parted ways with a campaign consultant when Drop Site revealed that she had also worked for tech company Palantir, which is controversial in liberal circles because of its government contracts involving immigration enforcement.

Democratic officials said Trump's return to the White House has also revived interest in the party's official channels. The Democratic National Committee's relatively new digital media offering, a rapid-response clipping and messaging account with the handle @FactPostNews, has amassed more than 2 billion impressions on Threads, X, Facebook, Instagram and Bluesky in 2026 alone.

"I remember thinking to myself, there's a chance that this flops and doesn't get any traction," said DNC Deputy Chief Mobilization Officer Paulina Mangubat. "It's been really, really successful."

At times, the mix of new voices on the left has erupted in public tensions.

Grim recently faced criticism for boosting failed Democratic candidate Graham Platner in Maine, and he

was accused of trying to undermine the credibility of the sexual assault allegation that torpedoed Platner's campaign. Grim said while he recognized people were angry, his reporting on the allegation was meant to share additional context.

"If we're going to litigate allegations in the court of public opinion, we can't pick and choose what details we want to share with the public out of a fear of how they'll be received," he said.

More recently, when Drop Site interviewed progressive U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna of California, one of its journalists pressed Khanna on whether Hamas was justified to attack Israeli soldiers on Oct. 7, 2023. Khanna refused to agree.

But Grim said those are the kinds of tough questions independent media are there to ask — and that American voters increasingly want to see their representatives in Congress answer.

"People want to see you being accountable to questions, and if they don't agree with you, sometimes that's fine," he said. "I think the smarter politicians are starting to recognize that."

Lindsay Clancy's ex-husband set to resume testifying about the day she killed their 3 children

By MICHAEL CASEY and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — The former husband of a Massachusetts woman on trial for killing their three young children is expected to return to the stand Wednesday, continuing his testimony about a day that began with art projects and playtime in the snow and ended with him coming home to find the bodies.

Prosecutors say Lindsay Clancy strangled her children — Cora, 5, Dawson, 3, and Callan, 8 months — on Jan. 24, 2023, after sending her then-husband, Patrick, out for some errands. She then used multiple methods to try to end her own life and was paralyzed from the waist down after jumping from the home's second-story window.

Whether Clancy killed the children is not in dispute. But her attorney argues that she was driven by postpartum psychosis, a rare mental illness linked to the stress, sleep deprivation and hormonal changes that follow childbirth. Prosecutors contend that she acted intentionally and bears full responsibility for the deaths.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

Patrick Clancy has said in interviews that he forgives his ex-wife, whom he viewed as ill rather than evil. He was the first witness to take the stand Monday, when he testified about his former wife's deteriorating mental health in the months before the killings, including describing intrusive thoughts of harming the children and of suicide. But he said she appeared to be doing better as recently as two weeks before the murders.

Patrick Clancy closed out that testimony by going through the day of the deaths, which he said started as one of her "best days." Lindsay Clancy took Cora to a doctor's appointment and then returned home to build a snowman with her children and work on art projects.

If convicted of murder, Lindsay Clancy faces life in prison without parole. If found not guilty due to a lack of criminal responsibility, she would be committed to a state mental health facility.

The trial took a break Tuesday before resuming Wednesday.

Despite frustration over high prices, Federal Reserve is expected to keep rates unchanged -- for now

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve policymakers are losing patience with inflation, but they may not be ready to turn their frustration into action -- not this week anyway.

Meeting in Washington Tuesday and Wednesday, the Fed is expected to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged. Members of the central bank's rate-setting committee may not be so reluctant to act when they gather again next Sept. 15-16.

Inflation has been stuck above the Fed's 2% target for more than five years. New Fed Chair Kevin Warsh told Congress earlier this month that he had "no tolerance" for elevated inflation. Warsh is presiding over his second policy meeting this week.

Fed watchers Joseph Egelhof and Guneet Dhingra at BNP Paribas Securities say it's possible Warsh's central bank will "release the kraken" with a "shock rate hike" this week; more likely, they wrote in a commentary, policymakers will hold off, reluctant to risk disrupting financial markets that aren't expecting a rate increase yet.

Policymakers may also want to see more economic data: On Thursday, the Commerce Department delivers the first look at April-June economic growth and issues the Fed's preferred inflation measure – the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index – for June.

Overall, only 29% of Wall Street traders predict that the Fed will raise rates this week. But 76% foresee a rate hike in September. A month ago, only 59% of traders expected a September rate increase, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

"Policymakers' patience with high and persistent inflation is broadly exhausted, meaning there is a significant risk" of a rate hike in September, Egelhof and Dhingra wrote.

Casting uncertainty over the Fed's decision-making is the Iran war. The price of oil briefly blasted past \$100 a barrel last week on intensifying fighting. It's since settled down on hopes the United States and Iran can find some way to reduce tensions.

After the U.S. and Israel attacks on Feb. 28, Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz – through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas pass. That caused the greatest disruption in oil supplies in history and sent energy prices surging. They've since bobbed up and down depending on the ever-changing state of the conflict and negotiations to de-escalate it.

Now Iranian-backed Houthi rebels from Yemen are attacking shipping in the Red Sea, attempting to stop tankers carrying Saudi Arabian oil from passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

The uncertainty puts the Fed's inflation fighters in a bind.

"Sure, it is possible that the latest rise in prices is a transient blip that will reverse in a heartbeat. Then again, it seems equally that the war with Iran will get worse, that the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab will remain blockaded for months or longer, and that energy prices will continue to trend up," Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics, wrote in a commentary.

"Should the (Fed) set monetary conditions on a hope that oil prices will reverse course and stay low ... or should a central bank eschew wishful thinking and do its job of minimizing the probabilities that inflation will exceed target?"

Inflation has exceeded the Fed's 2% target since early 2021 when the U.S. economy overheated as it roared back from COVID-19 lockdowns. Inflation peaked at just over 9% in mid-2022 and began to drop in the face of 11 rate hikes by the Fed in 2022 and 2023. But progress has more or less stalled.

Besides the Iran war, other factors adding to inflation pressure are President Donald Trump's tariffs on foreign goods and a surge of investment in data centers to power artificial intelligence, which is driving up the cost of computer chips and equipment and electricity.

So-called core inflation – which excludes volatile food and energy prices – cooled in June, partly because apartment rents aren't rising as fast as they had been. And a temporary drop in gasoline prices last month also helped contain overall inflation.

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But several Fed policymakers have been arguing that the Fed will have to raise rates to return inflation to the 2% target.

"Sternly staring at inflation until it melts before our withering gaze is not an option," Christopher Waller, an influential member of the Fed's governing board, said in a speech this month.

France orders 4,000 more evacuated as fires displace a third of a million across southwest Europe

By THOMAS ADAMSON, MARK CARLSON and EMMA DA SILVA Associated Press

LEGE-CAP FERRET, France (AP) — French authorities ordered 4,000 more people evacuated from tourist sites along its Atlantic coast on Tuesday, widening what may be France's largest peacetime evacuation as returning heat threatened firefighters' fragile hold on a vast wildfire west of Bordeaux.

Fresh flames erupted later Tuesday near Grand Crohot, a popular Atlantic beach on the Lège-Cap-Ferret peninsula, local authorities said. A fleet of 23 planes and helicopters — up from 18 — dropped water and fire retardant as crews fought to keep the renewed flames from spreading.

"The situation remains complicated. That's clear. We're not out of the woods," Gironde prefect Sophie Brocas said.

She said that about 60,000 residents who were evacuated as a precaution from Le Haillan and parts of Mérignac and Eysines outside Bordeaux's ring road could return on Tuesday. No fires had broken out in the three areas, but residents were told to keep their mobile phones on and emergency bags packed.

The opposing movements — thousands ordered out of coastal resorts while those returning told to be on the alert — underscored how precarious the fire's hold remained.

Across France and Spain, roughly 330,000 people have been driven from homes and vacation sites by huge wildfires. Spain braced for its fourth heat wave of the summer, with several blazes still burning out of control, including the largest in its recorded history.

Even so, Spanish authorities began lifting evacuation and stay-at-home orders for thousands of people after firefighters made progress overnight.

The Gironde fire has burned an area four times the size of Paris and forced 220,000 people to evacuate. Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez has said it is "very likely" the largest civilian evacuation operation carried out in the country outside war.

Evacuations don't deter some vacationers

The precautionary evacuation order covered campsites, holiday villages, tourist residences and leisure parks around the resort of Lacanau, Gironde regional authorities said.

"We are at a point of fragility," Eric Brocardi, spokesperson for France's national firefighters federation, told the BFMTV broadcast network Tuesday. "We will continue attacking this fire despite the forecast rise in temperatures."

Even as nearby homes burned and authorities urged tourists to stay away, one family told Le Parisien newspaper it had gone ahead with its trip rather than forfeit a 4,000-euro (\$4,558) holiday, while another group debated abandoning a vacation that had cost 650 euros (\$741) each.

A fire making its own weather

At its most violent, the Gironde blaze created a gargantuan black thundercloud, electrified and lit from within. It generated lightning, violent winds and new fires beyond the original front. The phenomenon, known as a pyrocumulonimbus cloud, was the first recorded in France.

France's national weather service placed Gironde under a yellow heat warning beginning at midday Tuesday, forecasting inland temperatures of 33 to 35 C (91 to 95 F).

More than 1,160 square kilometers (448 square miles) have burned across France this year, according to the Interior Ministry.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, heating at more than twice the global average, according to the European Union's Copernicus climate service. Western Europe recorded its hottest June on record, with extreme heat and widespread dryness contributing to the spread and intensification of fires

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in France and Spain, Copernicus said.

Crews defend homes and cut firebreaks

In Le Porge alone, west of Bordeaux, the municipal government said about 150 homes were destroyed.

Officials warned that smoldering vegetation, rising temperatures and falling humidity could produce fresh outbreaks along the fire's vast perimeter.

Military engineers and forest-fire prevention crews resumed cutting firebreaks early Tuesday. Authorities said crews had completed 103 kilometers (64 miles) of firebreaks.

At least 110 firefighters have been injured, the prefecture said.

Thousands return as second fire stops advancing

In Landes, about 15,000 evacuees — roughly half of those displaced here — were allowed home after a separate wildfire stopped advancing.

"The fire is fixed, which is good news in the Landes," French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday evening. Regional authorities said that meant its advance had stopped and no new outbreaks had been reported.

Those allowed back included residents of Sanguinet, Parentis-en-Born, Biscarrosse's aviation village and a large campground. Several other neighborhoods remained inaccessible.

Authorities warned that the Landes fire was not extinguished. Residual hot spots, wind and drought could cause flare-ups, and surveillance and damping-down operations were expected to continue for days or weeks.

Thousands begin returning in Spain

Spanish firefighters made progress Tuesday, and authorities began lifting evacuation orders for at least 20,000 of the 79,000 people forced to flee over the weekend.

Francisco Martín, the central government's representative in the Madrid region, said orders would be lifted in 10 towns, allowing about 20,000 evacuees to return home and ending stay-at-home orders for another 14,000 people.

Residents of some villages in Ávila were also being allowed home, though authorities did not specify how many. Another 6,000 people could return after a smaller fire near Toledo was brought under control, while several thousand more went home in Castellón.

Hundreds of firefighters backed by military emergency brigades and water-dropping aircraft continued battling several major wildfires.

Smoke from the fires reached Madrid in recent days. Emergency services said residents in central and eastern districts could smell smoke and ash.

Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said Tuesday that nonstop work through the night left him "reasonably positive," though officials warned that crews had only a brief window before extreme heat returned.

Spain's national weather service said the country was bracing for its fourth heat wave of the summer, with temperatures expected to exceed 40 C (104 F) in some areas.

The government declared a national emergency over the fires.

At least 13 people have died in wildfires in Spain this year, making 2026 one of the country's deadliest fire seasons in decades.

"I've been living in San Martín de Valdeiglesias for 20 years and I never thought I would see this," said Estella Costales, an evacuated resident staying at a temporary shelter in Brunete, near Madrid. "It's unfortunate, but I never thought I would see such destruction."

Surroundings of Madrid remain at risk

The greatest concern was two large fires that had at times come close to merging into a single blaze in wooded hills about an hour's drive west of Madrid.

A fire in hilly, rural terrain in Ávila, west of Madrid, has become Spain's largest on record, scorching more than 500 square kilometers (193 square miles), the government said.

Local weather services in Ávila also shared images Tuesday of what they described as a pyrocumulonim-

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bus cloud over the blaze. Spain has seen these fire-generated thunderstorms form at least twice during wildfires in recent years.

"Look at how the valley is burned. Look at the houses, the people," said David Gonzalez, a 48-year-old gardener who used his van to deliver supplies to firefighters in Ávila.

"We are feeling a lot of anger and helplessness. It's something inhuman," he said.

Fires have burned 1,530 square kilometers (590 square miles) this year in Spain, Ecology Minister Sara Aagesen said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has called for a national pact to fight wildfires, saying climate change is making them worse.

Zelenskyy has a 'good meeting' with Trump at the White House as he seeks more cooperation with US

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Tuesday ahead of Sen. Lindsey Graham's funeral, with the two leaders discussing ways for Ukraine to produce its own powerful weapons and "other ideas that could help" in its ongoing war against Russia.

The sit-down in the Oval Office, which was closed to the media, followed a consequential meeting at the NATO summit earlier this month in Ankara, Turkey, where Trump announced that the U.S. will give Ukraine a license to make Patriot defense systems — a long-running request from Kyiv to counter Russian missile attacks.

Taken together, those meetings underscore how much the U.S. president, once a major skeptic of continued assistance to Kyiv, has warmed to Zelenskyy as Ukraine continues to withstand the Russian barrage more than four years after Moscow's invasion in 2022. The Ukrainian leader, whose relationship with Trump in his second term was marked by a raucous White House visit in which he was denigrated for being ungracious, has worked to court the Republican administration while relying on both likely and unlikely allies in Trump's orbit to exert their influence with the president.

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East, which has consumed much of the Trump administration's focus this year, has also become gradually entwined with Ukraine, with Ukraine firing on at least one Iranian vessel in the Caspian Sea over the weekend while Zelenskyy asserts that Russia has been offering satellite imagery of U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf to Iran.

In a post on social media after the meeting, Zelenskyy thanked Trump for the "good meeting" and the Republican administration's efforts to aid Kyiv in the long-running war. Officials also agreed that Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, the president's main envoys, would make a trip to Kyiv sometime in the future, according to a person familiar with the talks who was granted anonymity to discuss the closed-door meeting.

"The President and I discussed licenses for Patriot interceptor production and several other ideas that could help," said Zelenskyy, who also noted that he offered condolences to Trump for the death of Graham, a close ally. "We also spoke about diplomacy — it's important that the diplomatic process be reinvigorated."

Trump on Tuesday night weighed in on his meeting with Zelenskyy, calling it a "Great Honor" to meet with him. "Many things were discussed. The meeting went very well!" he wrote on Truth Social.

Zelenskyy wants to bolster Ukraine's defense production

Later during his whirlwind, one-day visit to Washington, Zelenskyy posted that he met with officials from Lockheed Martin for further cooperation in both defense production and exchanging of technologies, saying, "Ukraine has a lot to share with those who help us protect lives."

Later, in a meeting with senators at the Capitol, Zelenskyy again made his case for why Ukraine needs Patriot interceptors, as well as a sweeping sanctions bill to impact morale and increase pressure on Russia, according to two people with direct knowledge of the private discussion. They were granted anonymity to disclose details of a closed-door meeting.

While Ukraine remains grateful to Trump for agreeing to issue a license to manufacture the Patriots, Zelenskyy emphasized to senators that that is a longer-term solution. This year, Zelenskyy said, Ukraine

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will need the U.S. to provide missiles that Kyiv would pay for with European funds, said one of the people with knowledge of the meeting.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who like Zelenskyy was in Washington for Graham's funeral, also spoke to senators, saying Ukraine retains strong support from NATO and the European Union in terms of providing and paying for weaponry, as well as imposing sanctions on Russia.

Luke Coffey, a senior fellow at the conservative-leaning Hudson Institute, said expanding production capacity for Patriot interceptors is not only vital for Ukraine, but also for the U.S. and its Gulf allies, particularly as supply runs low during the war in Iran.

"Ukraine has shown that its defense industry is capable, innovative and creative," Coffey said. "I have no doubt that when they're granted the license, they will be able to produce these missiles which will hopefully mean there will be more available for the U.S."

Trump welcomed Zelenskyy to the White House as the Ukrainian leader traveled to Washington to honor Graham, whose final act as a public official was visiting Kyiv and securing an agreement on a package of sanctions that seek to punish countries that purchase Russian oil, gas and other exports.

In a Fox News interview Tuesday, Trump recalled Graham's hawkishness and said the South Carolina senator's support for Ukraine never wavered. Trump said Graham had suggested it was time to make a deal with Iran but had no similar suggestion for the Russia-Ukraine war.

"Ukraine, he's very militant about," Trump said on "Fox & Friends." "I mean, Lindsey liked war, to be honest with you."

The Trump administration's embrace of Zelenskyy also comes as Laura Loomer, a far-right activist with the U.S. president's ear had a recent, widely publicized change of heart on Russia's war against Ukraine.

Ukraine highlights ties between Iran and Russia

Ahead of the meeting, Zelenskyy also warned that Russia has been aiding Iran as the war persists by capturing satellite imagery of U.S. bases in the Gulf region that later appear in Iran. The Ukrainian president also asserted that there was a "clear correlation" between Russia's images and subsequent Iranian strikes.

Iran is a key ally of Russia in its war against Ukraine and has helped Moscow build up its drone expertise.

But on Monday, Trump downplayed any impact of potential Russian assistance for Iran.

"I don't think they've been doing it, certainly not at a high level," Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he traveled to Michigan. "And if they have, it has been very un-impactful."

On the Caspian Sea attack, the foreign ministers of Iran and Ukraine spoke about the matter, according to statements posted on social media Tuesday. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called the conversation "frank" and said Ukraine's focus is "solely at defending our country from Russian aggression" and not on targeting civilians.

Iran has said at least one sailor was killed in the attack. For his part, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran is also not seeking escalation but "made clear any attack on our citizens or interests is unacceptable."

Pro-Ukraine backers pushing to advance sanctions bill

Zelenskyy had a busy itinerary during his latest visit to Washington. During his meeting at the Capitol, which was held just before a key vote on the Russia sanctions bill and after Graham's funeral, the Ukrainian leader argued that they have a window to bring Russian President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table, according to one of the people with direct knowledge of the meeting.

In a bipartisan 86-12 vote, the Senate took the first steps toward passage of legislation to penalize countries that continue to buy Russian oil, gas and other exports after more than a year of negotiations.

The bill has dozens of backers from both major political parties and is seen as the main policy tribute to Graham, who died unexpectedly this month from a tear in his aorta. It imposes tariffs on goods from the world's top five purchasers of Russia oil or natural gas, including China and India.

The legislation also includes sanctions against Putin; senior Russian political and military leaders; and Russian financial institutions and energy projects.

US thwarts an Iranian missile attack and launches strikes with Saudi Arabia against militias in Iraq

By BEN FINLEY and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said Tuesday that it knocked down an Iranian missile barrage and worked with Saudi Arabia's forces to strike sites in Iraq that Tehran-backed militias have used to launch attacks in recent days, shattering a brief pause in fighting.

All Iranian missiles launched against American forces in the Middle East were intercepted, U.S. Central Command said, adding that they "remain vigilant and at a high state of readiness." In announcing the strikes in Iraq, the U.S. warned that further attacks on American troops or Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure risked additional action.

The United States and Iran had experienced a period of calm, during which neither announced attacks for days following weeks of escalation over the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf waterway and narrow chokepoint through which 20% of the world's traded oil normally flows.

There was no immediate comment from Tehran on the U.S. military statement or the strikes.

The fighting flared at the end of a month packed with multiple pressure points on President Donald Trump. In recent weeks, four U.S. troops died during the fighting, while the Pentagon asked an increasingly skeptical Congress for money to cover the conflict's ballooning costs.

High gasoline prices tied to the choked-off Strait of Hormuz are contributing to fears that Republicans are vulnerable in November's midterm elections. The U.S. House narrowly passed a resolution to halt military action in Iran last week, sending another warning to Trump that reflects the war's unpopularity with many Americans.

Trump has repeatedly retreated from threats to knock out bridges, power plants and other infrastructure but he told Fox News Channel earlier Tuesday that Iran knows he'll "finish the job" if its leaders don't make a deal to end the war.

Saudi Arabia and US strike Iran-backed militias in Iraq

Iran launched its ballistic missile attack before American and Saudi forces carried out strikes in Iraq, according to a U.S. official, who stressed that the two attacks were not connected. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to detail sensitive military operations.

"U.S. and Saudi fighter aircraft struck multiple terrorist logistics and weapons sites across eastern Iraq in a strong response to over 30 IRGC-directed aerial drone attacks in the last 72 hours," U.S. Central Command said, using an acronym for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

It said the Revolutionary Guard "and its terrorist proxies must cease these attacks to avoid further U.S. military response."

The Saudi Defense Ministry acknowledged the strikes in a post on social media, warning that "the Kingdom emphasizes that it does not seek escalation but will respond to any aggression it faces."

Saudi Arabia said Tuesday that it shot down drones fired by Iran-backed militias in Iraq for a second day, while Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen claimed to have forced a Saudi oil tanker to turn around as part of their self-styled blockade of the kingdom.

The kingdom's Defense Ministry said air defenses intercepted and destroyed several drones that had tried to target petroleum facilities in the nation's eastern region.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi ordered security agencies to investigate after the Saudis alleged a similar attack on Monday. The Iraqi military said the country is committed to "preventing Iraqi territory from being used as a route or launching point for any attack targeting brotherly or friendly countries."

The Iraqi militias have denied any role in the drone attacks. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iran-backed armed groups, called the Saudi claims "fabrications" and implied that Monday's attacks were carried out by the Houthis, who had themselves claimed to have attacked Saudi oil facilities.

A Saudi oil tanker is targeted

The Houthis claimed to have fired missiles at the Saudi oil tanker NCC Ghazal, forcing it to turn back. Last week, they announced a blockade of Saudi shipping, putting another key Middle Eastern waterway

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— through the Bab el-Mandeb strait leading to the Red Sea — at risk.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Center said a tanker reported hearing explosions while traveling in the southern Red Sea. It did not name the tanker but said the crew and vessel were safe.

The rebels fired on at least one Saudi tanker in the Red Sea last week.

Iran and the U.S. had paused their fighting over the weekend, though tensions remained high even as officials said mediators achieved progress in getting the two sides back to negotiations.

Iran said earlier Tuesday that U.S. strikes during an earlier period of escalation destroyed an airport and a marine control tower, and caused damage to 12 bridges and two tunnels, among other infrastructure.

Iran had effectively closed the strait when the war began by firing at freighters and tankers off its coast or threatening them. Following the signing of an interim ceasefire deal in June, a battle for control over the strait 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.

Trump sits down with Netanyahu in Washington

The new strikes came on the same day Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Trump at the White House for the first time since the two launched the war against Iran on Feb. 28. Israel has been notably absent from the recent fighting with the Islamic Republic.

Netanyahu said it was an “excellent” meeting, and Trump called it “very good,” noting that “many important subjects were discussed.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. ability to intercept Iran’s incoming strikes has become an increasingly salient issue as lawmakers, members of the military and experts raise concerns over the nation’s diminishing stockpiles of missile interceptors.

Sean Parnell, the Pentagon’s chief spokesperson, pushed back on those concerns, saying the military “has everything it needs to execute at the time and place of the president’s choosing.”

Lindsey Graham eulogized as an ‘American original’ with global reach

By LISA MASCARO, MEG KINNARD and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Lindsey Graham, the son of pool hall owners who rose to become one of his generation’s more influential U.S. politicians at home and abroad, was eulogized Tuesday as “a true American original” during memorial services in Washington.

Graham’s flag-draped casket arrived for a tribute at the U.S. Capitol, where the Republican served for more than 30 years as an indefatigable dealmaker who talked and laughed and badgered his colleagues into action. Later, President Donald Trump joined foreign leaders for a funeral at Washington National Cathedral, a testament to Graham’s stature on the global stage.

Trump called Graham “a giant of the United States Senate, a true American original who left us much too soon.”

In mostly prepared remarks, Trump described his onetime presidential rival turned ally as “the first person to make you laugh and one of the last people that you’ve really ever wanted to fight.”

Trump told the story of how he had publicly disclosed Graham’s cellphone number on the campaign trail, reciting the number in the cathedral, but said the senator had the last laugh because “Lindsey did not stop calling me for the next 10 years.”

Among those gathered were Israel’s Benjamin Netanyahu and Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelenskyy, leaders of two countries fighting separate wars, a nod to Graham’s role as a foremost believer in the power of the U.S. and its military to intervene in the world’s problems. Fox News’ Sean Hannity said in his remarks that Graham would have been moved.

Trump Cabinet officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and current and former senators and lawmakers joined in the

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pews, as did Graham's sister, now- Sen. Darline Graham, who was appointed by the state's governor to fill the remainder of her brother's term.

It was the start of two days of services, with burial Wednesday in Graham's home state of South Carolina. Joint Base Charleston will be renamed in his honor, an Air Force official said. Graham died suddenly on July 11 of a likely aortic tear, according to preliminary findings. He had just returned from a whirlwind trip to a NATO summit in Turkey, where he celebrated his birthday, and a visit to Ukraine. He was 71.

Graham had spent his final days negotiating punishing Russia sanctions intended to help Ukraine, and senators worked quickly voting to advance the package late Tuesday evening, a final gesture for their colleague.

A place of honor for a 'swashbuckling' senator

During the morning service in the Capitol Rotunda, Vice President JD Vance described Graham as a "swashbuckling" man — "who swashbuckled into the Senate" with his suit jacket open — and was impossible not to like.

"Lindsey was a towering figure," Senate Majority Leader John Thune said, choking back tears during his remarks.

First elected to Congress in the 1994 Republican revolt that swept the GOP to power, Graham was part of a new era of conservatives in the House — and among the first Republicans from his Southern state since Reconstruction.

He quickly rose to prominence as a manager in Democrat Bill Clinton's presidential impeachment, and he was elected to the Senate in 2002. There, he formed an alliance with Sen. John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, and Sen. Joe Lieberman, an independent from Connecticut, in what would become the "three amigos," globe-trotting the world focused on national security issues.

Vance recalled how he argued with Graham over the senator's staunch support for aid to Ukraine, but praised his legacy, saying Kavanaugh "would not be on the Supreme Court" were it not for Graham's "fierce advocacy."

For decades, Graham had been at the center of the action — a member of virtually every bipartisan gang in Congress — with a relentless ability to adapt to political realities, particularly when it came to Trump.

One by one, many of Graham's colleagues said their goodbyes in the Rotunda. Sen. Katie Britt, R-Ala., placed both hands on his casket and then put her hand on her heart. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., saluted from her wheelchair. Former Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., bowed and delivered a brief kiss and Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., gave a fist bump.

The 'Trump whisperer' had one last mission: Russia sanctions

Perhaps nowhere was Graham's political dexterity on display more as when he navigated his on-again, off-again relationship with Trump.

Graham had denounced Trump as "unfit for office" during the 2016 presidential campaign, but over time he had become what colleagues called the "Trump whisperer," someone even world leaders relied on to understand the president.

Days before his death, Graham had won Trump's support for the long-fought bipartisan proposal to impose sanctions on Russia over the war in Ukraine, in what would be one of the strongest U.S. efforts to hamper Russian President Vladimir Putin's ability to prolong the conflict.

Senators said they wanted to move on the sanctions package as a tribute to Graham. After the funeral Zelenskyy, who had met with Trump earlier at the White House, arrived at the Capitol to talk with lawmakers ahead of voting. He then watched the roll call from the visitors' gallery inside the Senate chamber.

Graham's champions and potential successors

At the Washington cathedral, a roster of socially conservative and anti-abortion leaders gave readings, including Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, Marjorie Jones Dannenfelser of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America and the Reverend William Franklin Graham III.

When Hannity said how important Darline Graham and her family had been to the senator, she put her hand over her heart in response.

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Lindsey Graham never married, but the Air Force veteran helped support his younger sister after both of his parents died while he was at college and then starting law school. He became the guardian for Darline, who was then 13.

Darline Graham is now running in a potentially crowded primary field for the fall election. The filing period for the special primary election closes Tuesday, with voting set for Aug. 11.

Busiest US death chamber: Florida executes 2 men in a day, including an octogenarian

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

STARKE, Fla. (AP) — Florida on Tuesday became the first state in nearly a decade to carry out two executions in a single day, the last an 80-year-old man who was the second-oldest inmate known to receive a lethal injection in modern U.S. history.

Hours earlier, the state executed a former police officer convicted of killing a young girl.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has made Florida's death chamber the nation's busiest at the end of his final term, saying too many families have waited too long to see justice. The lethal injections several hours apart were the first nearly back-to-back executions since Arkansas put two men to death three hours apart in 2017.

DeSantis, who has the authority under Florida law to set execution dates, decided earlier this month to carry out both executions on the same day.

Nationwide, the use of the death penalty had been declining for two decades, but that number has ticked up behind the increased pace in Florida.

Man, 80, apologizes for killing his ex-girlfriend's parents

Dominick Anthony Occhicone, the octogenarian, was pronounced dead at 6:13 p.m. at Florida State Prison near Starke after a three-drug injection. His execution came nearly five hours after the former police officer, James Aren Duckett, 68, received a lethal dose in the same death chamber.

The chamber's curtain went up promptly at Occhicone's 6 p.m. scheduled execution hour. He lay strapped to a gurney with an IV in his arm, a spiritual adviser near his feet.

Asked if he had any final words, Occhicone said he thanked all of his Christian brothers for visiting him over the years. He also apologized to the family of the victims and to his own family for what he had put them through.

"Sorry for all the hurt I caused," he said.

"I know it don't mean much, but I'm sorry," Occhicone added. "I never meant to do what I did."

The injection began at 6:02 p.m. followed by several minutes of deep breathing. When the breathing slowed, a warden shook him and yelled his name without response.

Occhicone, who was convicted of fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend's parents in June 1986, is the oldest known prisoner executed in Florida since it began modern record-keeping a century ago.

Nationwide, an older inmate, 83-year-old Walter Moody Jr., received a lethal injection in Alabama in 2018 for a wave of mail bombs in 1989 that killed a federal judge and wounded a Black civil rights attorney.

Afterward, the children of victims Raymond and Martha Artzner released a statement saying their family had come to "the end of a long and painful journey."

"The years since June 10, 1986, have been filled with sleepless nights, empty chairs at family gatherings, and those one-on-one conversations that were lost," it read in part. "Today does not erase that pain and it does not undo the harm, but it does close a door and end a chapter in our lives that has just lingered on far too long."

A former police officer was executed in the afternoon

Earlier Tuesday afternoon, Duckett became the 11th Florida inmate executed this year. He was convicted of raping and drowning 11-year-old Teresa McAbee while he was working as a police officer in central Florida in 1987.

Duckett declined to make a final statement and showed no response several minutes into the execution

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when the prison warden shook him and shouted his name. He was pronounced dead at 1:19 p.m.

Afterward, the girl's relatives spoke of decades of suffering.

"I waited nearly 40 years to have him dead," Dorothy Tula, the victim's mother, said before breaking down.

"This man took advantage of his badge," said Tracy Mcfall-Buskirk, the girl's cousin.

Record execution numbers for governor's final two years

Nationwide, a total of 19 executions including Tuesday's have been carried out this year. Florida leads with 12 executions to date in 2026 — more than all other states combined.

DeSantis, who leaves office in January, oversaw a record 19 executions last year, more in a single year than any other Florida governor since the U.S. reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976.

Another execution in Florida is set for August.

Many on Florida's death row have been there decades

DeSantis hasn't said why he scheduled two executions hours apart. And he's rarely commented on the pace of executions, previously noting some on death row had committed crimes as far back as the 1980s.

"Justice delayed is justice denied. I felt I owed it to them to make sure this ran very smoothly," the governor said last year.

Florida Department of Corrections records show multiple executions on a single day were more common in the past, the last being in 1964.

The U.S. Supreme Court denied last appeals from both men Tuesday.

All Florida executions are by injection of a sedative, a paralytic and a drug that stops the heart, according to the Department of Corrections.

Netanyahu praises first meeting with Trump since launching the Iran war

By ERIN CUNNINGHAM, MICHELLE L. PRICE and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had an "excellent" meeting with President Donald Trump at the White House on Tuesday, their first sit-down since launching a joint war against Iran and it offered Netanyahu a chance to smooth out strains in their relationship.

The closed-door meeting lasted nearly an hour and a half and was "positive and productive," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said. Trump, in a social media posting several hours after the talks, called it a "very good meeting" where "many important subjects were discussed" but offered no further details.

The face-to-face talks come as both leaders face growing pressures at home. Netanyahu is up for re-election and is embattled in part because of his deteriorating relationship with Trump. Trump is under pressure to end an unpopular war that has wreaked economic havoc and driven prices higher ahead of midterm elections this November.

Later on Tuesday, Iran shattered a brief period of calm in the war by launching multiple ballistic missiles at U.S. forces in the Middle East, the U.S. military said, adding that all of the Iranian missiles were successfully intercepted.

An Israeli official briefed on the White House meeting said Netanyahu made it clear to Trump and his Cabinet that if Iran were to attack Israel, they would respond, but that beyond that, they would trust the judgment of the president regarding next steps. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to share details of a private meeting.

Despite signs of tension between the two before the meeting, Netanyahu was effusive afterward in a post on Instagram, noting that the meeting included Trump's "entire senior team."

Vice President JD Vance, who has had critical words for Israel and in June warned Israeli officials that Trump was their only friend among world leaders, was among those in the meeting.

"When I say excellent, I don't mean it in a superficial way," Netanyahu said in Hebrew. "A conversation with full partnership, with mutual support, with an understanding of the common goal of ensuring that Iran does not have nuclear weapons, and other goals as well."

Netanyahu later joined Vance and Trump at a funeral for Sen. Lindsey Graham, where the Israeli leader

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was seen speaking to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who met with Trump earlier in the day.

Trump expresses some frustration with Netanyahu before sitdown

Trump revealed some tension with Netanyahu ahead of their meeting, complaining about reports that the Israeli leader planned to discuss intelligence on Iranian activities at Pickaxe Mountain, a potential nuclear site that the U.S. president has threatened repeatedly to bomb.

"I know exactly what's going on at Pickaxe," Trump told "Fox & Friends." He insisted that whatever Iran is doing is "not a big problem" and that "Bibi's telling me that because he wants me to stay involved."

"Why do you have to announce to the world?" Trump added, flashing his frustrations with his ally.

The Israeli official said that Netanyahu reiterated to Trump during the meeting that Israel will always share its intelligence with the U.S. but that it also understands that Washington has its own timeline and considerations to factor in, including other allied countries in the region that would be affected if Washington were to escalate militarily.

Trump has had a hot-and-cold history with Netanyahu over the years, but upon his return to the White House last year, their alliance seemed stronger than ever. When they started the war together in February, it was with a united front, touting their respective militaries as acting in lockstep to take out Iran's leadership and pave the way for a government more friendly to the West.

But as Iran fought back — sending drones and missiles slamming into U.S. bases and high-rises in cities in the Gulf, and choking off the Strait of Hormuz — Trump came under immense pressure both at home and by allies in the region to end the conflict.

Netanyahu has been deferential to Trump on next steps with Iran

Since then, Netanyahu, who wanted to continue the fighting in Iran and against its ally, Hezbollah, in Lebanon, has been sidelined as Trump sought a deal with Tehran. Disagreements with Trump and Vance have burst into the open over the war in Iran and more.

"The Americans are making it clear to the Israelis they are the ones who are running the war," Israeli journalist and political analyst Amit Segal wrote Monday in the daily newspaper Israel Hayom. "It is clear to everyone that Israel has been put in the back seat."

Of Trump, Netanyahu said Sunday that "many ways, it's his decision" on how to move forward. "If he can do so without returning to intense military fighting, that's fine. Why not?"

"But one way or the other, they have to end their nuclear program," Netanyahu told Maria Bartiromo on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" about Iran.

The Israeli official said the two leaders also discussed the framework agreement that the U.S. and Israel signed with Lebanon over the Israel-Hezbollah war and the expansion of the Abraham Accords, which have Arab and Muslim-majority nations normalize ties with Israel.

Steps to allow other forces in Gaza and in Lebanon

Netanyahu also needed to persuade Trump that he won't play spoiler to U.S. diplomatic and reconstruction efforts in Gaza and Lebanon, where the president has previously complained that "too many people are being killed" by Israeli strikes.

In Lebanon, where the Israeli military occupies much of the south, Israel agreed to allow the Lebanese army to deploy to some villages as part of a "pilot program" testing its ability to secure areas where Hezbollah once operated. The U.S. State Department says the next round of talks between Israel and Lebanon will take place next week in Rome with a focus on expanding the program.

On Gaza, Israel's security cabinet green-lit on Sunday a measure that would, in theory, grant entry to the first members of an international stabilization force outlined last year in a U.S.-backed ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas.

Few countries have pledged troops, however, and Israel would approve their entry into Gaza on a case-by-case basis. The troops — including from Morocco and Uganda — would only be allowed to operate in a small, desolate area in Rafah in the south, where the plan is to vet and house some displaced Palestinians.

The Israeli military continues to carry out strikes it says target militants but that have also killed civilians.

Israel has lost a significant amount of bipartisan support in the United States, particularly over Gaza. An

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AP-NORC poll published this month found a dramatic erosion of support among American adults for Israel. Near the White House, a small group of protesters chanted, "Netanyahu, you're a tyrant" and "Bibi, you're not welcome here," referencing the prime minister's nickname.

Judge allows use of police interview in trial for man accused of killing Tupac Shakur

By JESSICA HILL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A Nevada judge ruled on Tuesday that the recording of an interview the man accused in the killing Tupac Shakur gave to police in 2008 could be used at his upcoming trial.

Judge Carli Kierny found that the interview is admissible in Duane "Keffe D" Davis' trial, which is scheduled to start Aug. 10.

Davis, 63, is charged with murder in Shakur's 1996 killing and faces life in prison without parole if convicted. Prosecutors allege Davis orchestrated the killing.

Shakur's death is considered one of the most notorious unsolved murders in the United States. The case went cold until Davis began making public statements about it, including in a book he co-wrote in which he said he was in the Cadillac and provided the weapon used to shoot Shakur.

Defense attorney Michael Sanft argued that a 2008 interview Davis gave law enforcement was supposed to be confidential, and that detectives explicitly told him the interview was not supposed to be used against him.

"I sang because they promised I would not be prosecuted," Davis wrote in his book "Compton Street Legend."

Prosecutors argued there was no basis to exclude the interview from the trial, which is expected to take about four weeks. They argued the interview was no longer inadmissible when Davis chose to write his book and speak publicly about what happened.

Davis' attorney unsuccessfully tried to block the use of the book in the upcoming trial, arguing that it was fictionalized to make a profit and impossible to determine which parts, if any, he wrote. Kierny determined Davis adopted the book as his own, citing an interview in which he described the book as the "real truth."

The 2008 interview was used in former Los Angeles Police Department Detective Greg Kading's book "Murder Rap: The Untold Story of the Biggie Smalls & Tupac Shakur Murder Investigations." Portions of the recording were also played in documentaries, including the recent documentary "Sean Combs: The Reckoning."

Shakur was killed Sept. 7, 1996, in Las Vegas. He and Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight were sitting at a red light when a white Cadillac pulled up beside them near the Las Vegas Strip, and gunfire erupted. Shakur was shot multiple times and died six days later. Knight survived with minor injuries.

Three others were with Davis in the Cadillac, including his nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, but Davis is the only person still alive. None of the others faced charges in Shakur's killing before they died.

In his memoir, Davis said he obtained a handgun from an associate and tossed it into the back seat of the Cadillac but did not say who fired the fatal shots.

In the 2008 interview, Davis described how he and his crew saw Shakur that night and pulled up beside them, and said that Anderson "popped them." Anderson denied involvement in Shakur's killing at the time. He died two years later in an unrelated gang shooting in Compton, California.

A witness testified to the grand jury that Anderson didn't have a "clear shot," so Deandrae "Freaky" Smith took the gun and fired.

Davis wrote in his book that investigators were "clearly shocked and surprised" when he began answering questions about Tupac's death.

He also expressed regrets about talking to them.

"It kills me on the inside to know that I told them anything," he wrote.

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Senate confirms Jay Clayton as nation's intelligence director

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate has confirmed Jay Clayton to become head of the nation's intelligence agencies, putting a permanent director in place weeks after President Donald Trump sought to delay his nomination.

Clayton, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York and a former Securities and Exchange Commission chairman, was confirmed 51-47 along party lines. Republicans had initially hoped to confirm Clayton in June, but Trump delayed his hearing in order to allow his temporary pick for the job, Bill Pulte, to take over for several weeks after former director Tulsi Gabbard resigned.

Senators from both parties have expressed concerns about Pulte, a former housing regulator who had no intelligence experience. Pulte was in charge when Trump delivered a speech from the White House earlier this month doubling down on his false claims about the 2020 election, which he lost, and released classified documents that he said were relevant to his arguments.

Democrats have also expressed concerns about Clayton, who lost bipartisan support after a contentious hearing two weeks ago in which he repeatedly refused to say that former President Joe Biden won the 2020 election.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said at the end of the hearing that he was "bitterly disappointed" in Clayton after initially praising his nomination.

Warner said he would oppose Clayton's nomination but acknowledged that Democrats are "between a rock and a hard place" with Pulte in the job.

Trump praised Clayton after the vote, writing on social media: "Jay is outstanding in every way, and will do a spectacular job as Director!"

Trump revisits false claims about 2020 election

The Democratic pushback on Clayton comes as Trump has made revisiting 2020 a primary focus, repeatedly trying to cast doubt on that election and amplifying debunked theories about Biden's win. Clayton said repeatedly at the hearing that the election was "certified" for Biden, declining to say outright that the Democrat won.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said he thought Clayton's performance was "abysmal," and that "makes it much less likely that he will get Democratic votes."

Hours before the scheduled Senate vote on Clayton, Pulte released intelligence community documents from 2020 that described China's capacity to interfere in the American political process as well as vulnerabilities in the election system.

The substance of the material was largely recycled and already known, but its disclosure is part of the broader Trump administration effort to raise concerns about the integrity of U.S. elections.

Clayton emphasized his experience

Pulte has also said he has presided over a downsizing of the national intelligence office, which functions as a coordinating hub for the U.S. government's intelligence agencies. He boasted on social media that with the latest round of job cuts, the office is carrying out about a 30% staff reduction from weeks ago. He has not offered details about those cuts, making it hard to immediately corroborate the extent of any reductions.

Clayton did not mention Pulte in the confirmation hearing. But he emphasized his own government and national security experience, attempting to assuage senators in both parties.

"I saw firsthand how a strong national security apparatus depends on decisive judgment, discipline, integrity, and effective communication and cooperation across different branches of the government," Clayton said. "If confirmed as Director of National Intelligence, I will commit to upholding these principles every day."

Clayton also told senators that he had no involvement in Trump's speech about the 2020 election.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Tom Cotton, R-Ark., who expressed frustration last month when the hearing was delayed, said that Clayton has a reputation for operating with "morality, decency

and integrity" in his previous positions.

"Jay Clayton is a highly qualified nominee with a deep experience combating a wide range of national security threats," Cotton said.

Pentagon ties new casualty category for renewed US-Iran fighting to the end of 'Operation Epic Fury'

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon said a new, separate category was created in its official casualty system to account for those killed and wounded in the renewed U.S.-Iran fighting because "Operation Epic Fury," the military's name for combat operations against Tehran, has ended.

The Defense Casualty Analysis System, or DCAS, has removed the four soldiers killed and dozens of troops wounded in the latest exchange of fire from its official Iran war tally and placed them in a new category called "Overseas Operations."

The overall total of wounded from the conflict now stands at 642 troops, between the figures listed under Operation Epic Fury and those listed in the new category in the Pentagon's online system.

A Pentagon official said Tuesday that because Operation Epic Fury has concluded, the military has decided to classify casualties tied to the latest strikes in the new category. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters, would not offer a date for the formal end of the operation.

That characterization raises questions about properly counting the impact to U.S. service members after the U.S. military carried out nearly two weeks of consecutive strikes against Iran in a bid to gain control of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran responded by striking neighboring countries in the Middle East that host U.S. forces.

After a few days of paused hostilities and efforts by mediators to get both sides back to negotiations, U.S. Central Command said Tuesday that it intercepted multiple ballistic missiles fired at American troops in the region. The U.S. and Iran had agreed to a tenuous ceasefire in April and signed an interim deal to end the war in mid-June before strikes began again this month when Iran attacked ships in the crucial shipping route.

After the four soldiers who were killed this month were removed from the Iran war death toll in the online system, Pentagon spokespeople said last week on social media that it was not an effort to hide the growing human cost of the conflict but rather the result of "anomalies" and "temporary data disruptions" that were being resolved "imminently."

On Sunday, those troops appeared by name in the new "Overseas Operations" category. Three soldiers were killed after a base in Jordan was struck July 17 by Iranian ballistic missiles and drones, and one died in Iraq a day later during a controlled detonation of an Iranian drone.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters at a White House briefing in May that the operation had "concluded," saying that "we achieved the objectives of that operation."

When Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth testified before Congress last week, he didn't argue that the Iran war had concluded and even offered lawmakers some cost estimates for the conflict that ran through Sept. 30.

New York school pauses plan to deploy humanlike AI robot teacher after backlash

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A school district in a rural corner of upstate New York is hitting pause on plans to deploy an AI-powered, humanoid robot in the classroom after state education officials, teachers and local residents raised concerns, including the maker's ties to a company that produces hyper realistic sex bots.

The Salamanca City Central School District's board approved the nearly \$60,000 purchase from Realbotix with visions that "Sally," as the stationary robot with long dark hair has already been nicknamed, would

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enhance the education of high school students studying robotics and technology fields.

"Having a difficult time programming an Arduino board? Don't even know what an Arduino board is? Ask Sally and she can explain it," Superintendent Mark Beehler, said Tuesday. "The robot also provides opportunities for students to learn how the robot is maintained, how it is updated with new approved content, and how to troubleshoot issues."

But as news spread in the small community located on the Seneca Nation of Indians reservation, parents and teachers worried about how students' personal information would be used. Unionized teachers took aim at Realbotix's sex doll sister company, even as district officials and the company itself stressed the two manufacturers operate independently.

"A robot built by a company associated with sex dolls has no business in our classrooms," said Melinda Person, president of the labor union New York State United Teachers.

For now, the robot pilot remains on hold as the district works through "enhanced student data privacy agreements" with the state education officials and continues outreach to the community, according to a statement the district posted Friday on its Facebook page.

State officials and teacher voice concerns

State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa said she remained concerned about the robot's role in the classroom even after her staff met with district officials.

"Although you confirmed that the robot would not have any role delivering classroom instruction, a recent presentation to the board characterized the robot as a 'tutoring platform,'" Rosa wrote in a letter to the district Friday.

She also echoed residents' concerns about what data privacy and security protections would be in place.

Unionized teachers, meanwhile, suggested the effort was a first step toward replacing, flesh-and-bone educators. "Sally" will be able to move her arms and hands but have nonworking legs.

"Our students don't need robots," Person said. "They need real relationships with caring adults."

District officials defend robot purchase

Beehler stressed the pilot, which also includes rollout of a virtual, AI-powered teacher's assistant and at-home tutoring program, is not about replacing staff.

"There is no possible way a robot can replace a human in a school," he said Tuesday. "Even if it were possible, it would in no way be in the best interest of students. Teaching is a human-to-human process."

Beehler, who was connected to Realbotix through a former colleague, said the Las Vegas-based company was a natural fit because its robots are already programmed with WozEd, a curriculum from Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak that the district uses.

Last year, a San Diego charter school rolled out two AI-powered robots purchased from Engineered Arts, a robotics company based in the United Kingdom, for \$500,000.

Salamanca Schools, in social media posts, stressed that "Sally" won't be collecting students' personal information, recording audio or video of its interactions or sending data back to Realbotix.

The robot also has been programmed to steer clear of inappropriate topics such as sex, violence and gambling, and it won't be able to search the public internet or draw answers from unvetted generative AI services.

Instead, all information on "Sally" will be stored locally, with the life-sized robot consuming roughly the same amount of energy as a laptop, according to the district.

Robot maker responds to criticism

Realbotix added Tuesday that student authentication would be handled through the district's existing systems, and any student-linked information would remain encrypted and under the district's control.

The company also pushed back at suggestions that "Sally" was simply a repurposed sex doll, saying it was a "newly manufactured, purpose-built educational unit" with no modified hardware.

The school's robot comes from Realbotix LLC, which focuses on healthcare, education and other nonadult commercial applications. A sister company, Intima LLC, holds an ownership stake in RealDoll, a longtime maker of sex dolls, including a line of AI-powered models billed as the "world's most advanced sex robot."

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"Realbotix LLC and Intima LLC have different product offerings with no crossover," the company said in a statement last week. "The two subsidiaries maintain their own management, personnel, payroll, facilities, manufacturing operations, product development, and market strategies."

Some residents remain wary

Beehler argued that it is crucial for isolated districts like Salamanca, which is located along the Allegheny River near the Pennsylvania state line, to find new ways to introduce cutting-edge products into classrooms.

"In most cases, our students need to travel 1-2 hours to have opportunities to see emergent technology," he said Tuesday. "One of the intents of the robot is to help level the playing field and motivate students to continue studying robotics, AI, and STEAM related career pathways."

Some Salamanca residents, though, remain unconvinced.

Joplin Ficek, who graduated from Salamanca High School in 2024 and now works at a daycare, said she doesn't see any reason to have robots or AI take such a prominent role at her alma mater at all.

"They just need to hire more people who are willing to put in the effort for the children," Ficek said. "They need more interaction with the children than having some robot raise our kids."

College NIL bill includes \$25 million 'retention pool' but is that enough to sway Big Ten, SEC?

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

A reworked Senate bill designed to regulate college sports proposes to more than double the amount of money schools could share with players as part of a flurry of revisions designed to win the support of the Big Ten and Southeastern Conferences.

Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti said Tuesday at his conference's football media days that he was waiting to review the new language in the Protect College Sports Act, and the hope is that the new version of the bill "provides a lot more help than not."

Among the key changes would be up to \$25 million devoted to a "retention" pool that would allow schools to pay athletes already on their rosters to stay. That would be in addition to the \$21.3 million schools are allowed to spend this season. Some \$5 million of the new money would be devoted to women's sports.

"That's all very specific language that has to work together with the (House) settlement, so we need to see the language on all of that," Petitti said.

The House settlement, which dictates the terms of revenue sharing, calls for 22% of certain revenues to be shared with the athletes. The retention pool figures to drastically change that math. Also uncertain is how it would impact name, image and likeness compensation from third parties, which allows schools to blow past the cap and many agree is the reason costs of assembling football and basketball rosters are spiraling out of control.

Jeffrey Kessler, the plaintiffs' attorney in the House case, told The Associated Press: "I would have to see the specific provisions of the entire bill to evaluate any issues with the settlement."

An outline of the changes made to the bill, a copy of which the AP obtained, also included changes the conferences sought over Olympic and women's sports; avoiding creation of so-called super leagues; language that would prohibit colleges from paying high schoolers until they enroll; and making sure conferences won't be required to participate in a media rights pooling arrangement the bill would allow.

Two other key points the conferences seek are refined language about limiting lawsuits over eligibility issues and preempting state statutes that guide NIL payments in favor of one uniform national law.

In speaking about the ramifications of the bill, Tennessee athletic director Danny White told AP this week that the best way to deal with the lawsuit issues is to let players collectively bargain.

"Even if they do act, there's still a lot of issues that they won't address and they probably can't address legally," White said.

There have been conflicting reports about how likely the bill is to reach the Senate floor, where it will need 60 votes to pass and move on to the House. Last week, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, said it was unlikely the bill would reach a vote before the Senate's begins its recess Aug. 7.

The recent action might have changed the calendar.

"There's a long list of areas where we'd like to see some improvements, but like the commissioner said, we also recognize that we're not going to get everything that we'd like," said Josh Whitman, the athletic director at Illinois who was chair of the NCAA board of directors through June. "And so ultimately, we'd like to see something put together in a package where the benefits outweigh some of the potential negatives."

Loss of work authorization sows confusion for thousands of Haitian immigrants and their US employers

By GISELA SALOMON and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

KEY WEST, Fla. (AP) — For more than a month, Bobby Kuchinsky arrived at his restaurant each morning worried about whether he still had enough staff or if this might be the last shift for some of his Haitian workers, who have spent over a decade as cooks, busboys and oyster shuckers.

On Tuesday, he suspended six of them after they lost authorization to work in the U.S.

Kuchinsky and thousands of other businesses owners and managers are living in a state of constant uncertainty because confusion clouds the status of work permits for Haitian employees with Temporary Protected Status, better known as TPS.

As part of its crackdown on legal and illegal immigration, the Trump administration terminated TPS for about 1 million people from more than a dozen countries, including 350,000 Haitians who have been living and working legally in the U.S. since 2010. The termination, which exposed them to deportation, was challenged in district courts. On June 25, the Supreme Court sided with the government, allowing the TPS program to end.

The cases went back to the lower courts, which generally take 32 days to announce their decisions following the high court's recommendations. In the meantime, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, extended the Haitians' work permits. The agency usually acted on the same day that the permits expired and offered extensions of only a few days, creating confusion and desperation among employers and the Haitian community.

Work permits were not extended

Then on Monday, the work permits were not extended, and fear mounted — not only due to the loss of jobs but also because of the potential for arrest and deportation to one of the poorest and most violent countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Almost 1.5 million people have been displaced because of gang violence in Haiti, where more than half of the country's nearly 12 million inhabitants need humanitarian aid. More than 2,300 people have been killed and more than 1,100 injured since January, according to the United Nations.

Citizenship and Immigration Services did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press requesting clarification on the validity of work permits.

In a written statement to AP, the Department of Homeland Security said TPS was created to be a temporary program, and the agency encouraged Haitians to request a \$2,600 check to buy a "free flight home."

"It's closing time, which means you don't have to go home, but you can't stay here," the DHS statement said.

Restaurant manager suspended TPS employees

As he did every morning, Kuchinsky, general manager of the Half Shell Raw Bar in Key West, logged onto the government website Tuesday to verify the work permits of six Haitian employees who were TPS beneficiaries. This time he learned their permits were no longer valid.

"I told them they are suspended," he said after meeting with his employees. "It was horrible. It wasn't fun ... they had fear in their face, tears in their eyes."

The manager, who has been working at the restaurant for more than 35 years, said he would keep checking the website for any changes. He said he decided to suspend the employees because it is easier than rehiring them, should they be allowed to work again at some point.

Before they left, he handed them a package containing information about their rights and the documents

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they would need in the event of being detained. He plans to pay them severance on Friday, if nothing changes.

Businesses face constant uncertainty

Miriam Singer, CEO at Jewish Community Services of South Florida, said the organization advised 18 employees that they were no longer eligible to work.

"It's been a very hard process," Singer said. "They are devastated and without a path forward for caring for themselves and their families." The Haitian workers provided home care to elderly Holocaust survivors.

Robert Dominguez, associate general counsel for Engage PEO, a human resources consultancy, said TPS has been "front of mind" for many businesses. He said it's hard for employers to keep up with the government's changes, particularly in industries such as construction, hospitality and long-term care, which rely on workers from outside the U.S.

"You just see change after change. You just see a bunch of alerts," Dominguez says. "I don't think it's clear-cut for most employers."

Katie Smith Sloan, CEO of LeadingAge, which represents nonprofit long-term care homes, said member facilities have been on edge.

"These providers and the patients themselves are dealing with a ton of uncertainty for months and months," she said. "And so now it all feels like it's about to come to a head."

Employees say every day feels like it could be their last

For some of the TPS holders, returning to Haiti is a possible death sentence.

One of the workers at the Half Shell said he left Haiti because of gang violence, arrived at the U.S. in 2016, got a work permit a few months later and requested TPS in 2020. Since then, he has been working in the restaurant industry, washing dishes.

"Each day feels like the last day," said the 62-year-old man, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear that he could be detained. "I don't know how I'm going to live — pay the rent, buy food — if I don't work."

The man, who rents a room in a mobile home, said he sends about \$550 a month to his wife and two brothers in Haiti. But he panics just thinking of going back there.

"I am afraid of being detained, deported, and sent back to Haiti — of being killed there," he said in a soft voice, with his gaze cast downward.

His two adult sons, who also live in the U.S, were beneficiaries of TPS and are seeking asylum, he said.

Asylum seekers have also been targeted

Kuchinsky said he is also concerned about 19 of his employees with pending asylum cases. The government has also targeted asylum seekers, and many have been detained in Key West, a tourist destination at the southern tip of the United States, he noted.

Among them is Bendy Gabriel, who worked in rice fields and left Haiti in 2017 after receiving death threats. He first traveled to Chile, where he worked in construction, but after three years he moved to the United States because he was not earning enough money to send to his family in Haiti.

Gabriel, his wife and then 5-year-old son arrived in the U.S. in December 2021 and five months later requested asylum.

But the process was slow, and they applied for TPS too. Now that TPS is over, he said he can continue working until his permit expires in 2030, although he does not feel safe.

"Some days I'm afraid. If immigration officers catch me and take me back to my country, they'll kill me when I get there," the 36-year-old man said.

Gabriel, who has a 4-year-old son who was born in the U.S., works as a cook at the Half Shell and another restaurant. He earns around \$5,000 a month, enough to pay \$2,400 in rent, buy food, and send at least \$300 a month to his father in Haiti.

"If we lose our jobs, it doesn't just affect us," he said. "How are we going to manage to send money to our families in Haiti so they can eat?"

Teen gets life without parole for killing 4 at Georgia's Apalachee High School

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

A judge on Tuesday sentenced a teenager who killed two students and two teachers in a shooting at Apalachee High School in Georgia to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole, calling his crimes "deliberate, contemplated evil."

Colt Gray, 16, had pleaded guilty Friday to 55 counts, including murder, in the Sept. 4, 2024, shooting at the school about 45 miles (73 kilometers) northeast of Atlanta.

Barrow County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Primm handed down the sentence after hearing from family members of those killed and victims, as well as investigators, Gray's grandmother and a forensic psychologist who had evaluated Gray.

Murder carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison in Georgia, so the only decision Barrow County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Primm had to make was whether Gray should ever be eligible for parole. He decided the teen should never be allowed out.

"You do not seem to be tormented by what you did. You seem to relish following in the footsteps of the murderers you idolize. You aren't wracked with guilt. You're proud of yourself," Primm said.

"We've seen no evidence he has any ability to develop a conscience or any ability ever to fully value human life," District Attorney Brad Smith had said during his closing argument, insisting that Gray "cannot be in society."

Defense attorney W. Charlton Allen told the judge his client was "not irretrievably broken." Allowing him the possibility of parole would give him "an opportunity of hope," Allen said, adding that a lack of hope "takes away the ability for him to change."

The victims got the sentence they asked for

"This is not a happy day. This is a relief day, I would say," Smith told reporters after the sentencing, adding that he hoped his team had "done honor" to the victims and their loved ones.

Teachers Richard "Ricky" Aspinwall, 39, and Cristina Irimie, 53, and students Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14, died in the shooting. Another teacher and eight more students were wounded, seven of them hit by gunfire.

Victims of the shooting and family members of those killed conveyed their anger and grief to Primm on Friday, almost all of them asking him not to allow the possibility of parole.

Shayna Aspinwall, the wife of math teacher and football coach Richard Aspinwall, described "a life sentence of grief and trauma for those left behind."

Investigators say Gray aspired to be a mass shooter

Investigators testified during the three-day sentencing hearing that Gray idolized mass shooters, talking about them online with other members of the "true crime community," a group of young people online who are fascinated with such attacks. Gray had chatted online about gaining notoriety through a school shooting.

Prosecutors played recordings of phone conversations Gray had with his mother, Marcee Gray, from a youth detention center in the months after the shooting. During those calls, he directed his mother to look up what people were saying about him online. He was excited when she described "fan art" drawings depicting him or comments people made about him and the attention he was getting online.

Gray had the "mental wherewithal" to mimic details of other mass killings on the day of the shooting, Smith said. He placed those "Easter eggs," anticipating that they would be mentioned in court one day and would perpetuate his fame, the prosecutor said.

"The shooting was not the culmination of the plan. The shooting was just one of the steps of the plan. The plan was ultimate and lifelong fame inside of the TCC," Smith said, referencing the "true crime community."

Gray's grandmother says he needed help

"Colt got less stability than he needed, which made him even more vulnerable," Allen, the defense at-

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torney, argued. He said his client got wrapped up in an online community where he found the acceptance he craved but wasn't getting at home.

Gray's maternal grandmother, Debbie Polhamus, testified that the teen had a troubled childhood and that his parents failed him. Her grandson had grown "highly agitated and aggressive" in the weeks before the shooting, she said, adding that she had urged his parents to get him some help but they didn't follow through.

"I tried to help Colt because nobody else was helping him," she said.

Polhamus said she visits her grandson once a week at a youth detention center and that he has improved enormously with treatment and medication. She said her grandson has been doing a lot of reading and wants to study to get a GED diploma.

"I'd like to see him have a chance at some point to prove himself," Polhamus said.

Gray was put in foster care while in detention because his father was in prison and there were concerns about his mother's contact with him. Candice Broce, director of the state Division of Family & Children Services and commissioner of the Georgia Department of Human Services, managed his case.

Broce testified that Gray appeared to show improvement. After Marcee Gray was barred from speaking with her son by a July 2025 no-contact order and he started taking medication, staff at the youth detention center told Broce it "changed him essentially into a different child," she said.

The judge acknowledged that Gray had been failed by his parents, his extended family and, to a certain extent, society.

"But that failure does not absolve you from who you chose to idolize, worship and become," Primm told Gray.

15-year-old arrested at Seattle food festival shooting was armed with a ghost gun, police say

By GENE JOHNSON and CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The 15-year-old arrested after a shootout at a food festival near Seattle's Space Needle over the weekend was armed with a ghost gun with an extended magazine, police said Tuesday.

Police Chief Shon Barnes told a news conference that the weapon was a 9 mm gun from Polymer80 — a now-defunct company that was once a leading manufacturer of ghost gun parts.

Investigators also recovered two other weapons and 14 shell casings that had been fired by weapons of two different calibers, he said.

The festival shooting killed 3 people and injured 4, including a toddler

The shooting in the waning hours of the three-day Bite of Seattle festival left three people dead, including a 19-year-old gunman, and at least four people injured, including a toddler. Authorities say they believe the violence was gang-related, and they are reviewing any available surveillance video and interviewing victims and witnesses in an effort to identify others who may have been involved.

An eighth person with a possible gunshot wound checked themselves into a Seattle hospital after the shooting, but checked out before investigators could conduct an interview, Barnes said. Legal obstacles have prevented detectives from obtaining the patient's identity, he added. It's unclear if the injury was related to the festival shooting or whether the person might have been involved in it, but Barnes asked for the person to come forward and speak with investigators.

Ghost guns lack serial numbers law enforcement can use to trace them

Ghost guns are privately made — often homemade — firearms that lack serial numbers used to trace them. They have often been purchased without a background check. Law enforcement officials say ghost guns, including those made with 3D printers, have been used in violent crimes across the U.S.

Lawsuits and state-level bans eventually pushed Polymer80 out of business in 2024, and last year, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a rule adopted under former President Joe Biden requiring companies to treat gun kits like other firearms by adding serial numbers, running background checks, and verifying that buyers are 21 or older.

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The weapon the 15-year-old had been shooting when he surrendered to police was equipped with an extended 33-round magazine, Barnes said. The magazine still had 19 rounds in it.

At the scene Sunday night, police also recovered a 9 mm handgun that they do not believe was used in the shooting.

And on Monday, as food vendors were allowed to return to the area to clean up and collect their equipment, a third weapon was discovered: a Glock 45 model 9 mm with a switch allowing it to fire fully automatically, Barnes said. Police believe that gun was fired during the shooting. It had an extended 40-round magazine, with 21 rounds remaining in it.

Police believe there were at least 3 shooters

In a document filed in juvenile court in Seattle on Monday, police said they believed there were at least three shooters: the 15-year-old, an acquaintance who died at the scene and "at least one other unknown suspect." Authorities had earlier said they believed there were two.

A judge on Monday ordered the 15-year-old to be held in juvenile detention for investigation of assault and firearms charges pending further hearings. The King County prosecutor's office said it expected to receive the case from police on Wednesday for a charging decision. Hong Tran, a public defender assigned to the teen's case, declined to comment in an email to The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The King County Medical Examiner's Office on Monday identified the dead as Carlos Israel Sanchez Villalba, 44; Ashley Whitehead, 56; and Junior Cee Niko Semo, 19.

Victims remembered as kind, willing to help others and a 'free spirit'

Villalba was a husband and father of three known for his kindness and willingness to help others, according to a GoFundMe campaign launched Monday to help his family with funeral expenses. He died from a gunshot wound to his torso, while Whitehead died from a gunshot to her pelvis and Semo died from multiple gunshot wounds, according to the medical examiner's office.

Whitehead had just moved to Washington from Alabama a year ago and was enjoying the festival with one of her adult daughters when she was shot, her cousin Michelle Whitehead told The Associated Press. She was taken to the hospital and died in surgery, she said.

Ashley Whitehead adored her two adult daughters, and also loved nature and arts and crafts, her cousin said.

"I would consider her just a free spirit. She had the best sense of humor, the best gorgeous smile," she said.

During a vigil Monday night at the center, Michelle Whitehead stood among dozens of others with a sign that said "Whitehead Strong" as the group held a moment of silence and raised up flashlights on their phones to honor those that had been killed. Candles and flowers were arranged around them.

The four wounded included a 2-year-old boy, two men, ages 23 and 27, and a woman, 39, all of whom were discharged, a hospital spokesperson said.

One of the victims was walking a bicycle when struck, the court document said. The toddler was with his mother.

Wall Street's flip from AI to less-loved stocks accelerates, while oil prices keep easing

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Most of Wall Street rose Tuesday, even as stocks of computer chipmakers continued to tumble worldwide. Oil prices, meanwhile, eased further from the two-month high they hit last week.

The S&P 500 added 0.2%, but the modest move masked big swings underneath the surface. The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 537 points, or 1%, while the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.2% after briefly dropping 9.3% below its record set last month.

The majority of the U.S. market rose after more companies delivered stronger profits for the spring than analysts expected. Coca-Cola climbed 5% after its revenue rose 7% despite what CEO Henrique Braun

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called "a dynamic consumer landscape."

Sherwin-Williams rallied 8.3%, and Illinois Tool Works rose 3.6% after both likewise reported stronger earnings for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Stock prices generally follow the trend of corporate profits over the long term, and expectations are high for this most recent round of reports with the U.S. stock market still near its all-time high.

Such expectations are weighing particularly heavily on stocks of chipmakers and other companies that have been huge winners from the boom in artificial-intelligence technology.

Micron Technology's stock came into the day having more than tripled for the year following gangbuster growth, for example. During the three months through May 28, its revenue more than quadrupled from a year earlier.

But worries are rising about whether such growth is sustainable. Big spenders on computer memory could pull back on investments if AI does not produce as much profit or productivity as promised. Lower-cost AI models from China could also mean less demand for memory and computing power than earlier expected.

Micron dropped 8.9% and was the heaviest weight on the S&P 500. Others also helping to keep the market in check were Advanced Micro Devices, down 8.1%, and Applied Materials, down 7.8%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 15.60 points to 7,428.78. The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 537.24 to 52,747.32, and the Nasdaq composite fell 55.17 to 24,876.91.

The losses for chip stocks were even worse earlier in the day in other markets worldwide.

Sharp drops for SK Hynix and Samsung Electronics dragged South Korea's Kospi index down 10.8%. The market's losses were so big that trading was temporarily halted at times in Seoul.

"We believe the market was likely spooked by the progress of China's chipmaking equipment capabilities, and was worried that this progress would threaten the competitive position of global chipmaking and chip equipment leaders," said equity analyst Jing Jie Yu of Morningstar.

"That said, we believe the sell-off today is largely a knee-jerk reaction and overdone," he said. The dominant position of global chipmaking leaders is unlikely to be threatened meaningfully, he said.

Several huge spenders on AI chips and data centers are scheduled to report their latest quarterly results this week, which could offer updates on how much they're planning to invest. Meta Platforms and Microsoft are reporting on Wednesday, while Amazon is due on Thursday.

Because AI superstar stocks have grown so big, their movements carry more weight on the S&P 500 and other indexes than many other companies. But the broad U.S. market could hold up despite their swings if other, less-loved areas are able to keep rising. It's a rotation that some strategists have suggested could be healthy for the overall stock market.

In the oil market, the price for a barrel of Brent crude to be delivered in October fell 4.4% to settle at \$82.08.

It's been falling since late last week, when the price for a barrel to be delivered in September briefly shot as high as \$102.

Pushing up on prices have been worries that worsening fighting in the Middle East could slow the global flow of oil. On the other side, though, are hopes that the United States and Iran could still negotiate something to allow oil tankers to use the Strait of Hormuz to move crude.

Lower oil prices helped to ease Treasury yields in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.60% from 4.65% late Monday.

A weaker-than-expected reading on confidence among U.S. consumers also weighed on yields. Fewer consumers are saying they feel good about current business conditions, according to the latest survey released by the Conference Board Tuesday.

The drop in oil prices helped push traders to trim their bets that the Federal Reserve could announce a hike to interest rates following its latest meeting on Wednesday. They're forecasting a 31.5% probability, down from more than 36% a day before, according to data from CME Group.

Higher rates could keep a lid on inflation, but they would also slow the economy by making it more expensive for U.S. households and businesses to borrow. Long-term mortgage rates have already hit their highest level in nearly a year, chilling the housing industry.

Lawsuit claims US civil rights agency has halted all federal-sector class complaints

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A labor union and two female prison employees filed a lawsuit Tuesday accusing a U.S. civil rights agency of unlawfully halting their sexual harassment case as part of wider order to indefinitely suspend proceedings in all federal-sector class claims.

The lawsuit claims that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has ordered an indefinite suspension of federal-sector class complaints pending before the agency's administrative judges, who handle discrimination complaints from federal workers in a process that is different than for private sector workers.

The two women, who are correctional officers at a Louisiana federal prison, have a pending certified class complaint against the Federal Bureau of Prisons, claiming that prison management failed to prevent and correct widespread sexual harassment by inmates against female workers, including rape threats, unwanted touching and nudity. The women, Deanna Chelette and Alexzandria Boyd, were joined in their lawsuit by the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest union representing federal workers.

It is not clear why the EEOC gave the suspension directive, which the agency had not publicly disclosed, or how many other cases are affected. The EEOC referred all questions to the Department of Justice, which declined to comment.

Under President Donald Trump, the EEOC has drastically overhauled its civil rights enforcement priorities, including prioritizing cases aimed at stamping out diversity and inclusion policies, dropping cases on behalf of transgender workers and abandoning longstanding tools for investigating systemic discrimination. The changes have prompted several lawsuits against EEOC Chair Andrea Lucas, who says she is pursuing an "even-handed" and "colorblind" vision of workplace civil rights.

But it's not apparent how the order to suspend federal-sector class claims fits into the EEOC's new priorities. In the court filing, attorneys for the plaintiffs said the EEOC had provided "no reasoned explanation for a blanket policy that halts an entire category of discrimination cases." The lawsuit seeks to have the suspension directive vacated.

"Without an explanation, it's hard to infer what the EEOC's intentions behind this were, but it's hard to ignore that this is part of a broader campaign at the EEOC to undermine the ability of employees to protect rights that Congress has provided to them under the civil rights laws," said Joseph Sellers, co-chair of Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll's civil rights and employment practice and one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs.

The pending class complaint claimed that management at Louisiana's Federal Correctional Complex at Pollock failed to stop inmates from subjecting female workers to sexual harassment. The complaint included declarations from eight other women who also described the harassment and management's response, and estimated that the class complaint would include least 182 women. The Federal Bureau of Prisons did not respond to requests for comment.

According the lawsuit against the EEOC, Administrative Judge Erania Ebron had certified the class in March 2025. But in December, Ebron issued a notice that case had been paused until further notice.

Attorneys in the case argued that the suspension violates the EEOC's own regulations governing complaints filed by federal workers requiring the agency to handle complaints promptly.

The lawsuit said that during the seven months the case has been halted, Chelette, Boyd and other women "have been subjected to, or are at risk of, ongoing and escalating sexual harassment that continues to go unremedied. They have no information about when, if ever, their case will continue."

"Management is just sort of emboldened and taking even less corrective action, sending the message to the inmates that you can sexually harass and abuse these female staff and get away with it because we're not going to do anything to do you," said Heidi Burakiewicz, an attorney for the plaintiffs and founding partner at Burakiewicz & DePriest.

While it remains unclear how many cases the EEOC has paused, the attorneys who filed the lawsuit said they are representing federal workers in at least five other class complaints that are stalled, including cases against the FBI and the Department of Defense.

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While the plaintiffs have the legal right to opt out of the EEOC process and bring their case to federal court, attorney said it would require them to essentially build their case anew, including securing class status from scratch in a process that could take years.

NFL starting QB auditions are uncommon, but Browns, Falcons and Vikings camps begin with competition

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

EAGAN, Minn. (AP) — The quarterback position took even more heat — and hits — than usual last season around the NFL.

Ill-timed injuries to Daniel Jones, Patrick Mahomes and Bo Nix left their teams in the lurch. Joe Burrow, Jayden Daniels and Lamar Jackson had trouble staying healthy. Others once targeted and trained as franchise players were either sidetracked or discarded, as J.J. McCarthy, Kyler Murray, Michael Penix Jr. and Tua Tagovailoa found themselves on insecure ground.

Training camps always present a fresh start. Jones, Mahomes and Nix have been cleared for full activity, stabilizing or energizing the huddle in Indianapolis, Kansas City and Denver. Cincinnati, Washington and Baltimore are plenty happy to turn anew to Burrow, Daniels and Jackson. Murray (Minnesota) and Tagovailoa (Atlanta) flew to new places for welcomed scenery changes.

After all 32 reset buttons have been pushed, though, a handful of teams have reported with varying levels of intrigue and scrutiny surrounding the most important position on the field. Here's a closer look at the camps where there's either a legitimate competition for the season-opening starter or a measure of uncertainty:

The Browns, naturally, are auditioning QBs once again

Since Cleveland got its NFL team back in 1999, the Browns have made the playoffs just three times — and won only one postseason game. There's no arguing the connection to the perpetually shuffling depth chart at quarterback, with 42 different starters over those first 27 years.

The latest was Shedeur Sanders, who fell to the Browns in the fifth round of the 2025 draft after they'd selected Dillon Gabriel in the third round. Sanders is now competing for the job with Deshaun Watson, the fallen star whose health problems and off-the-field trouble have limited him to just 19 games over the last five seasons. Watson last played on Oct. 20, 2024, before an Achilles tendon rupture and reinjury kept him sidelined in 2025. Rookie head coach Todd Monken had hoped to name a starter by the start of training camp, but the competition will last at least a few more weeks.

Falcons bring Tagovailoa into the fold with Penix recovering from knee surgery

Atlanta had a hot seat on the offseason quarterback carousel, cutting Kirk Cousins to clear salary cap space after two unfulfilling seasons and signing Tua Tagovailoa after Miami dumped him and ate a record \$99 million in dead money against the cap. Cousins' status immediately got complicated when the Falcons drafted Penix eighth overall in 2024, and the situation grew murkier yet last year when Penix tore the ACL in his left knee.

Penix had not yet been cleared for full-team work when the Falcons were last on the field at minicamp, so health and experience make Tagovailoa the front-runner for the job, though new head coach Kevin Stefanski has publicly declared this an open competition.

Murray lands in a favorable spot with the Vikings after McCarthy's rocky debut

J.J. McCarthy struggled with consistency and injuries that further hindered his opportunities to learn and improve in his debut with the Vikings last season, so the club reopened the search this year and found Murray available for the veteran minimum salary.

The Vikings have not given up on McCarthy, the 10th overall pick in the 2024 draft, and they'll split turns with the first team offense at least for the early stage of training camp. But if Murray is healthy, after spraining his foot last season and missing time between 2022-23 to recover from knee surgery, he's the clear favorite.

Willis gets big money from the Dolphins for his potential

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The Dolphins didn't give \$45 million guaranteed to Malik Willis for him to take turns. Their new leadership from Green Bay — general manager Jon-Eric Sullivan and head coach Jeff Hafley — became enamored with the 27-year-old over his two seasons as backup for the Packers.

With only three starts over the last three years, plus three more as a rookie with Tennessee in 2022, however, Willis is unquestionably unproven. Quinn Ewers took over for a struggling Tagovailoa and made three starts late last season, and the 2025 seventh-round draft pick performed well during spring practice sessions to present a potential alternative should the Dolphins need to consider one.

Cardinals give Brissett a pay bump and a public backing for the job

After moving on from Murray, the Cardinals landed on this short list of quarterback uncertainty — until satisfying veteran front-runner Jacoby Brissett with a new contract and formalizing his place atop the depth chart on Sunday. Fellow journeyman Gardner Minshew and third-round draft pick Carson Beck are waiting behind him in case a significant injury or costly interceptions were to give new head coach Mike LaFleur pause at some point this season.

Brissett, who's in his 11th year in the NFL, started 12 games last season after Murray's injury. He passed for a career-high 3,366 yards, but Arizona finished 3-14. After switching teams five times in five years, Brissett has stayed put for the first time since a four-season stint with Indianapolis. He was the starter for the Colts in 2017 and 2019. Minshew, who's on his sixth team in eight years in the league, was the primary starter for the Colts in 2023 after replacing then-rookie Anthony Richardson.

Raiders soft launch the Mendoza era with the comfort of Cousins

The best long-term outlook of the group clearly belongs to Las Vegas after taking Heisman Trophy and national championship winner Fernando Mendoza with the first pick in the draft. The Raiders under new head coach Klint Kubiak also brought in a sturdy bridge to that bright future by signing Cousins to help ease the rookie in.

Cousins is on top of the depth chart to start camp and the favorite to lead the Las Vegas offense in the opener, which would stop a streak of six straight quarterbacks drafted No. 1 overall starting their season opener — following Cam Ward, Caleb Williams, Bryce Young, Trevor Lawrence, Joe Burrow and Murray. Baker Mayfield in 2018 with the Browns was the last quarterback who didn't start his first game as the first overall pick.

FIFA plan for Kushner-backed \$20 billion operation to run World Cup meets fury from Europe's UEFA

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — FIFA President Gianni Infantino's plan to create a \$20 billion company running the World Cup with private investors including the Kushner family was announced Tuesday — and immediately attacked by European soccer body UEFA.

"It is not FIFA's to sell," UEFA said in a statement. "None of us are the owners of football."

Infantino's plans to form a commercial subsidiary, which would be called FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), running competitions like the World Cup and Club World Cup was first reported by The Times of London.

FIFA said in a statement FFE would raise up to \$4.2 billion later this year to help fund development programs "based on an initial equity valuation of \$20 billion by carefully selecting long-term investors who will purchase minority, non-controlling interests."

FIFA is working with J.P. Morgan while intended investors include Thrive Eternal launched by Joshua Kushner, whose brother Jared Kushner is a son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The men's World Cup that finished this month only deepened the political and personal ties between Trump and Infantino, and fueled concerns about those ties including from UEFA.

"The soul and governance of football are not assets to trade — especially with zero transparency as to who gains financially," UEFA said Tuesday, responding to the reports of selling stakes in FIFA competitions.

FIFA is currently a Swiss-based not-for-profit association of its 211 national member federations worldwide.

Those members must approve any plan and would get the chance "to access up to \$20 million in one-

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off capital," FIFA said.

"This is about the democratization of football worldwide," Infantino said in a FIFA statement, which added that "a consultation process has begun."

UEFA, however, said it took reports of the project "extremely seriously. So should every national Football Association."

"This crosses a line that football's governing institutions should never cross," said UEFA, which comprises 55 of the FIFA members.

FIFA's \$20M offer to member federations

The outline of Tuesday's surprise announcement was, FIFA said, detailed by Infantino to members who met in Manhattan on July 18 ahead of the World Cup final. There, Infantino promised to "unleash the commercial potential and opportunity that FIFA has."

FIFA's statement Tuesday about its proposed project led on how much money each of its 211 members could get through 2038 in the "FIFA Fast-Forward Program."

Instead of the currently promised \$8 million each in development funds through the 2027-30 World Cup commercial cycle, it would be \$20 million, then \$22 million and \$24 million in the following cycles.

FIFA banked record World Cup income of about \$12 billion from the 2026 tournament which had unprecedented high prices for tickets and hospitality across the U.S., Canada and Mexico. It already was unclear how that money could be matched from Spain, Portugal and Morocco co-hosting the 2030 men's edition.

Member federations could choose if they wanted to take part in the new financial opportunities, FIFA said.

"FIFA would retain sole control of FFE and exclusive authority over football governance, competitions, match calendar, and all regulatory and sporting decisions," the soccer body said.

FIFA's integrity standards were called into question during the World Cup, including by team coaches, Norway's soccer federation and a top European public body, the Council of Europe.

FIFA's previous attempt to privatize assets

The project announced Tuesday is the second time in Infantino's increasingly controversial 11-year presidency he has tried to push through a multi-billion dollar deal with private backers.

In 2018, Infantino proposed a secretive \$25 billion offer over 12 years with SoftBank of Japan to create new global competitions, including an expanded men's Club World Cup, seemingly backed by Saudi Arabian money.

That ultimately failed after meeting fierce resistance from UEFA, which saw threats to its prize assets: the Champions League and the European Championship.

Infantino still built closer ties to Saudi soccer and the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. Saudi Arabia will host the 2034 World Cup and largely funded the revamped men's Club World Cup hosted in the U.S. last year.

Infantino's future?

The financial success of the just-ended World Cup has looked likely to ensure Infantino is re-elected next year unopposed for a fourth and final term in office through 2031.

At his re-election by acclaim in 2023 in Rwanda, Infantino suggested any CEO delivering similar financial results would be kept in the job forever.

Speculation has swirled for years Infantino might want a different global role in soccer beyond his FIFA presidency, which is due to end when he is 61.

The Times reported Tuesday that a CEO-like commissioner role of the new FFE operation could be created for Infantino.

"This has never been discussed," FIFA said in a statement Tuesday. "However, the FIFA president and the FIFA administration will and must have leading roles in this entity — if approved."

There was no timetable suggested Tuesday for debate and decisions by FIFA, its ruling Council chaired by Infantino, and the 211 members.

FIFA is scheduled to hold an online congress on Nov. 23 to confirm hosts of the Women's World Cup editions in 2031 and 2035.

Joe Biden interviews with memoir ghostwriter reveal him discussing sensitive information

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

Newly released audio tapes, disclosed by a conservative activist group, appear to show Joe Biden sharing classified information with a biographer and sometimes claiming memory lapses during interviews that occurred before his election to the presidency in 2020.

About three hours of audio and 117 pages of transcripts — with many redactions — were released by the Oversight Project, an arm of the Heritage Foundation, after Biden lost a prolonged legal fight to keep his conversations with his memoir ghostwriter, Mark Lewis Zwonitzer, private.

"They didn't even know I had this," Biden told Zwonitzer in October 2016, near the end of his second term as Barack Obama's vice president, as he talked about sensitive foreign policy matters handled by the administration.

In one 2017 session, after Biden had left the West Wing and before he'd launched his own presidential campaign, he appeared to admit retaining classified information from his time as vice president.

"I just found all the classified stuff downstairs," Biden said. "I wrote the President a handwritten 40-page memorandum arguing against deploying additional troops to Iraq -- I mean, to Afghanistan on the grounds that it wouldn't matter, that the day we left would be like the day before we arrived."

The potentially classified information itself is redacted in both the audio and transcripts that the Oversight Project released.

The right-wing group first sued to obtain the tapes after Special Counsel Robert Hur decided in 2024 not to charge Biden for how he handled classified information. Biden cooperated with Hur's inquiry and told the special prosecutor during his presidency that he did not intentionally mishandle any classified material.

Hur, who obtained the tapes as part of his inquiry, said in announcing his decision that he believed a jury would find Biden a sympathetic figure because of his age and what Hur described as a "poor memory" — a statement that became a flashpoint in public debate about Biden's age and fitness for the presidency.

Biden was 74 when the interviews began. He was 81 and seeking reelection when Hur released his report in early 2024, though Biden later ended his campaign for a second term after a halting debate performance against Republican Donald Trump.

The tapes contain instances of Biden being unable to recall some dates and details of topics he was discussing with Zwonitzer. Biden also showed a command of many details, recalling meetings and details of conversations referenced in the notes he shared.

At the Oversight Project, Vice President of Litigation Jeff Clark insisted the tapes prove Biden's decline.

"The tapes have always belonged to the American People, the Oversight Project just delivered them to their rightful owner," Clark said in a statement. "The knowledge of his deterioration was well-established."

A Biden spokesman blasted the release as politically motivated.

"President Biden's conversations for a book a decade ago that discussed his late son are private, and were provided to the Department of Justice on the express condition they stay that way," said TJ Ducklo. "Reversing course and making them public is just the latest example of this Administration weaponizing the DOJ for political retribution."

Biden initially sued to stop the Department of Justice from releasing the material, claiming the conversations were private. But he dropped his suit after a divided panel of appeals court judges rejected his bid. Biden could have petitioned the Supreme Court to intervene or asked for a rehearing by the full U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

In a 2-1 ruling, a three-judge panel from the circuit court found a "substantial" public interest in disclosing the material.

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Americans' confidence in US economy falls as Iran conflict sends gas prices higher

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans' confidence in the economy fell this month as gas prices resumed their climb after the U.S. and Iran stepped up their fighting.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index fell to 90.8 in July from 92.2 in June. That's essentially the same tepid range it's been in since the beginning of the year. In late 2024 and early 2025 the readings were well above 100.

Consumer attitudes had improved modestly in June as gas prices came down to around \$3.70 a gallon from more than \$4.50 a gallon in late April and early May. But as fighting in the Middle East escalated, the average price for a gallon of gas in the U.S. started to rise again. On Tuesday it was \$4.10, according to the auto club AAA.

After being attacked by the U.S. and Israel in late February, Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz, through which about one-fifth of the world's oil travels, causing a spike in gas prices. That accelerated inflation, causing Americans' inflation-adjusted incomes to decline.

Americans remain soured on the economy after five years of elevated inflation, potentially posing a risk to President Donald Trump and Republicans in the midterm elections, which are now less than 100 days away.

Trump continues to blame inflation on his predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden. Yet inflation has risen since Trump's inauguration last year, to 3.5% from 3% in January 2025. It jumped even further after the Iran war began Feb. 28, when it was just 2.4%.

Write-in responses to the survey, which were collected from July 1 to July 22, remained pessimistic. The Board said references to gas prices were down slightly but remained elevated. Respondents' mention of food and grocery prices increased.

Government data shows that buying food to bring home has gotten 33% more expensive since the beginning of 2019. To navigate those higher prices, Americans have turned to couponing, comparison shopping and cutting back on favorite foods as they absorb the biggest jump in grocery prices in a half-century.

Beef epitomizes out-of-control grocery prices for many Americans. The price of a pound of ground beef reached \$6.82 in June — 79% more than at the beginning of 2019, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

References to jobs and unemployment picked up slightly this month and views of the current job market fell. Expectations of how the labor market will be six months going forward improved slightly, but remained in negative territory.

U.S. employers slowed hiring last month and added only 57,000 jobs, less than half the previous month's total. The unemployment rate declined to a low 4.2% from 4.3% in May, though the drop mostly occurred because many people out of work gave up looking and were no longer counted as unemployed.

The number of consumers who mentioned war and geopolitics decreased this month, but the Board suspects that recent escalation in fighting between Iran and the U.S. could cause those mentions to rise in the next survey.

Will tough talk be enough? Fed Chair Warsh faces pressure to combat inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve is expected to keep its key interest rate unchanged when it meets Tuesday and Wednesday, but chair Kevin Warsh is under increasing pressure to hike rates soon, a move that could provoke ire from President Donald Trump, who appointed him.

The Iran war has reignited, pushing oil and gas prices higher — a trend that will worsen inflation in the coming months. Soaring investment in the artificial intelligence buildout is raising the cost of laptops, smart phones and electricity. And price hikes from tariffs could be in the pipeline after Trump imposed

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new duties on dozens of U.S. trading partners.

All those trends might lead to only temporary price increases, rather than a sustained burst of inflation similar to the spike in 2021-2022. Yet inflation, according to the Fed's preferred measure, has topped its 2% target for more than five years, making it harder for the Fed to ignore price spikes, no matter how brief. Core inflation, which excludes the volatile energy and food categories, has risen since last December and has been stuck at around 3% or higher since 2023. Without noticeable progress soon, some Fed officials have said rate hikes will be needed.

"Unfortunately, inflation does not appear to be headed sustainably back all the way to 2%," Lorie Logan, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, said recently. "Modestly higher interest rates would better balance the outlook." Logan is a voting member of the Fed's rate-setting committee.

Warsh's tough talk

Warsh, since taking over as chair in May, has emphasized that the Fed will get inflation back to 2% without specifying how. In his first news conference as chair last month, he made clear he wouldn't provide the kind of signals about the Fed's next steps that his predecessors, particularly Jerome Powell, did.

But in congressional testimony earlier this month Warsh said the Fed has "no tolerance" for higher inflation. And in the first statement on rates issued under his watch, the central bank pledged that it "will deliver price stability."

Such comments, along with the resumption of the Iran war and the renewed climb of oil and gas prices, have already lifted borrowing costs. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note — which strongly influences mortgage rates — briefly topped 4.7% last Thursday, the highest in about 18 months.

But Warsh's tough talk raises expectations that he will follow through with action, current and former Fed officials say.

James Bullard, a former president of the St. Louis Fed, said Warsh's rhetoric "has been very effective" in establishing Fed credibility, "but markets are going to ask, 'Well, what have you done for me lately?' And they're going to demand action."

At the same time, more Fed officials appear to be growing impatient with inflation's stubbornness.

"Sternly staring at inflation until it melts before our withering gaze is not an option," Christopher Waller, an influential member of the Fed's governing board, said in a July 13 speech. If core inflation keeps climbing, the Fed's rate-setting committee "will need to consider" hiking rates "in the near term," he said.

Beth Hammack, president of the Cleveland Fed, said in a post on LinkedIn earlier this month that for the first time she is hearing business leaders call for higher rates, which is unusual since they typically support cheaper borrowing. She is also hearing from consumers "who can't make ends meet about a growing sense of despair," Hammack wrote.

Signs of inflation potentially improving

There is still tremendous uncertainty about what the Fed should do in the coming months, economists said. The most recent inflation report showed that core inflation cooled noticeably in June, and headline inflation fell sharply as gas prices declined almost 10%, a sign of what could happen if the Iran conflict is permanently resolved.

The cost of apartment rents, which spiked in the pandemic, is growing much more slowly than a few years ago.

John Williams, president of the New York Fed and vice chair of the Fed's rate-setting committee, said this month that "there are encouraging reasons to expect that inflation has peaked and should edge down in the coming quarters." He cited the decline in gas prices, before the Iran war restarted, and argued that the impact of tariffs on inflation has largely run its course. Even with new tariffs in place, they are likely to have the same limited effect of the ones they replaced.

Yet the resumption of fighting in the Middle East has pushed gas prices back above a nationwide average of \$4 a gallon, from just below \$3.80 around the July 4 holiday. The increase will likely push headline inflation higher, just before the Fed meets again in September. And adding to the Fed's challenge, higher interest rates can slow demand and bring down inflation, but they can't do much to restore oil and gas supplies disrupted by war.

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"The Fed is looking at inflation well above goal, but mostly for reasons that it doesn't have any influence on," Vincent Reinhart, chief economist at Dreyfus-Mellon and a former top Fed economist, said.

Warsh says Fed to keep inflation from 'broadening'

In congressional testimony this month, Warsh suggested the Fed's job is to prevent specific price increases for things like gas or computer gear from "broadening out" to other parts of the economy.

Traditionally, the Fed would do that by hiking rates if there were signs higher prices were spreading. But Warsh may hope that his tough talk, which has pushed up some borrowing costs, will suffice in the end.

"They are hoping and intending to talk the talk without having to walk the walk," said Stephen Douglass, chief economist at NISA Investment Advisors and former analyst at the New York Fed. He doesn't expect the Fed will raise rates this year.

Other economists say inflation won't be defeated without action by the Fed.

"There has never been a time when inflation gradually moderated without impetus from the Fed," Joseph Lavorgna, a former top economist at the Treasury Department and chief economist at SMBC Americas, said. "In other words, core inflation is not going to magically slow."

What to know about postpartum psychosis, which can affect a new mom's sense of reality

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

A key question in a Massachusetts murder trial is whether postpartum psychosis drove a mother to kill her three children.

On Monday, a jury heard opening statements in the trial of Lindsay Clancy, a former labor and delivery nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital. Both sides agree she strangled her children aged 5 and younger in 2023. But they disagree over whether she should be held criminally responsible.

Clancy and her ex-husband, Patrick Clancy, filed lawsuits accusing her medical providers of failing to properly diagnose and treat her condition.

Here's what to know about the disorder.

Postpartum psychosis is rare and dangerous

It's estimated to afflict only 1 to 2 per 1,000 women after delivery. Experts at the Cleveland Clinic describe it as a mental health emergency affecting someone's sense of reality.

It can happen to anyone after giving birth, but the chances are higher for people with certain mental health conditions. In a journal article on the subject in 2023, researchers at the Medical University of Lublin in Poland said about half of people with postpartum psychosis have a previous history of psychiatric problems and the most common risk factor associated with the condition is bipolar affective disorder, which causes extreme mood swings.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

Though most people with postpartum psychosis don't harm their children, mothers with severe cases may try to do so, and also may try to harm themselves.

Experts say it's important to seek immediate help if you or your partner or family member show signs of postpartum psychosis.

Signs of postpartum psychosis

Postpartum psychosis usually happens within several days of giving birth but can occur up to six weeks afterwards.

Symptoms may include hallucinations, delusions, paranoia or other behavior changes.

A woman may also have mood changes, such as mania or depression, disorganized thinking or behavior, insomnia, irritability or agitation.

It's not the same as postpartum depression or baby blues

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Postpartum depression is a mood disorder that can also be dangerous but is much more common. One 2024 study found that U.S. rates reached 19% in 2021. Baby blues is a lot milder and affects about 8 in 10 new moms shortly after delivery.

With baby blues, crying jags and feelings of sadness aren't enough to interfere with normal life and moms should still be able to care for themselves and their babies.

If sadness lingers for more than two weeks, that can be a sign of postpartum depression. Other signs include intense feelings of despair, anxiety, loss of interest, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, low energy and decreased concentration and appetite. Moms may worry constantly about their babies, be unable to sleep, or stop showering for days. They may even have thoughts of harming themselves.

Postpartum psychosis is the most severe postpartum psychiatric illness.

Treatment for postpartum psychosis

Moms with the condition need inpatient mental healthcare, which can include involuntary hospitalization. Treatments include medications or electroconvulsive therapy, a procedure done under anesthesia in which small electric currents pass through the brain, intentionally causing a brief seizure.

Experts say getting help early increases the odds of a good outcome.

US looks to boost anti-China spending worldwide by hundreds of millions, documents say

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is preparing to ramp up funding by hundreds of millions of dollars for programs designed to counter China's growing influence around the world, after it had put a halt to many of those initiatives last year during a flurry of budget and personnel cuts.

The administration notified Congress late last week that it intends to spend \$175.8 million to replace outdated and aging undersea telecommunications cables in the Caribbean and Central America to prevent China from moving in. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the notification on Monday.

The administration has expressed deep concern about China's activities in the Americas, pushing back on Chinese ownership of ports at either end of the Panama Canal, infrastructure projects funded by China's Belt and Road initiative in the region, and Chinese investment in the telecommunications sector.

A State Department official said China's economic activities in the Western Hemisphere pose risks to U.S. national security and prosperity. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly to the subject and spoke on condition of anonymity, said China's offerings may seem cheaper but in the end wind up being more expensive due to cost overruns, hidden maintenance fees and poor performance.

The underseas cable funding appears to be part of a broader push to restore support for initiatives aimed at blunting Chinese influence globally that would cost many hundreds of millions of dollars more. That is even as President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping put on a show of cooperation and Xi prepares to visit the U.S. this fall.

US weighs wider spending to counter China globally

The State Department is considering spending nearly half a billion dollars more on programs aimed at China throughout the Western Hemisphere, Africa and Asia, according to an internal State Department document obtained by AP.

"The United States must respond to the CCP's growing economic, technological, and diplomatic leverage around the world which undermines our national interests," the document says, using the acronym for the Chinese Communist Party.

Many of those proposed programs are designed to "reclaim diplomatic leverage" through investments in areas where the U.S. had previously been spending money but stopped as the Elon Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, carried out deep cuts to government budgets and personnel last year.

Those cuts, which dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development and eliminated several hundred diplomatic posts worldwide, also affected previously approved projects, including some aimed at

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countering China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said that China's cooperation with other regions "is not about wooing or rivaling anyone, but about safeguarding world peace, promoting global development, upholding international order and building a community with a shared future for humanity."

A senior U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss future administration plans, confirmed the Trump administration's intent to boost funding on countering China but could not speak to specifics. The official acknowledged discussions of large-scale projects but said many were still in the discussion phase.

Congress told about undersea cable project to keep China away

The program described to Congress on Friday is called the "Countering CCP Control of Caribbean and Central America Undersea Cables project."

It will "fund the installation of strategically selected undersea cable infrastructure" and support foreign governments in partnering with private sector undersea cable installers, according to the notification. The money will "support replacement of outdated undersea telecommunications cables in the Caribbean and Central America region with secure, U.S. and trusted alternatives," it said.

Even as it pursues the war with Iran and peace efforts in Gaza and Lebanon, the Trump administration has put a focus on the Western Hemisphere, capturing Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro earlier this year, ramping up pressure on Cuba's socialist government in the months since and imposing severe sanctions on the government in Nicaragua.

Under the new program, funding is anticipated to be given to or in support of undersea cable projects benefiting El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Haiti, the document said. The U.S. has tenuous ties with Nicaragua and would not be working with the government there.

Lin said undersea cables benefit people globally and that China is ready to work with the rest of the world to promote their construction and protection.

"Turning it into a political or security issue will only disrupt international market rules and threaten global digital connectivity and cybersecurity, which serves no one's interests," he said in Beijing.

Other anti-China efforts could focus on cyber and critical minerals

At the same time, the administration has drawn up plans to spend more than \$340 million for over 50 specific anti-China projects around the world, including many in the Western Hemisphere, according to the internal State Department document outlining various proposals.

The administration notified Congress in May that it had spent several hundred million dollars in counter-China funding from the 2024 budget that was approved by the Biden administration. However, many other projects funded for 2024 and 2025 had been put on hold.

Among the plans to be resurrected are the creation of security operations centers in Argentina and Belize to monitor Chinese threats to critical infrastructure and cyber platforms throughout the region. Also coming back would be initiatives to protect Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay from alleged Chinese attempts to infiltrate port operations and illegally exploit offshore fishing and critical minerals extraction.

More broadly, the proposal, which is still under consideration, would work against Chinese influence in the selection of a successor to the Dalai Lama "by developing proprietary technology to ensure secure communications and information collection." It also would go after international support for China's space program and push back against Chinese firms seeking to export surveillance and censorship technology.

The document did not describe the initiatives in detail.

Trump is expected to meet with Xi in September around the time of the annual U.N. General Assembly gathering of world leaders in New York. To prepare for that meeting, Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi last week at a regional security conference in the Philippines.

Trump has oscillated between anger and elation with Xi, whom the U.S. leader has sought to cultivate as an ally even while China pursues goals antithetical to many of his administration's. The ultimate impact of the proposed new programs won't be known for many months or years.

Judge rules singer D4vd must stand trial in killing of 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A judge ruled Monday that there is enough evidence to put D4vd on trial in the killing and dismemberment of 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez, who authorities said had threatened to expose their relationship and crater the indie-pop singer's rising career just a few days before his debut album dropped.

"i will end ur career and ur life," she told him in a text message sent the night before her death.

Los Angeles Judge Charlaine Olmedo decided that evidence presented during a preliminary hearing provided probable cause for a trial on charges of murder, continuous sexual abuse of a child under 14 and unlawful mutilation of human remains.

The dark and disturbing details presented over five days brought tears, gasps and horror to the courtroom. The evidence included grisly autopsy photos, explicit descriptions and depictions of sexual abuse and a stark picture of the final texts she sent minutes before she died and her phone went permanently silent.

The ruling was a major step in the 10-month investigation and prosecution of D4vd that began when the dismembered and decomposing body of a girl was found in the trunk of his Tesla in the Hollywood Hills in September while he was on tour.

D4vd shows no emotion as decision is read, and now heads to trial

D4vd, the 21-year-old whose legal name is David Burke, showed no emotion when the judge issued her ruling, watching calmly and intently in his orange jail clothes and glasses as he had throughout the proceedings.

He has pleaded not guilty. His lawyers argued that the murder evidence was insufficient, but did not argue against the other two charges. They declined to comment outside court.

Prosecutors argued that the evidence was overwhelming.

"Based on the mountains of evidence presented," Deputy District Attorney Beth Silverman said, "all of the allegations have been proved way beyond the standard required."

Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman said outside court that prosecutors presented only a "small fraction" of the evidence they have. They are still weighing whether to seek the death penalty, but Burke is eligible for it after Olmedo also found probable cause for lying in wait, killing for financial gain and killing a potential witness, special circumstances in a crime that allow for a death sentence.

Olmedo ordered that Burke continue to be held without bail. An arraignment is to be held on Aug. 31, and a trial could happen as soon as 60 days later.

The last night of Celeste Rivas Hernandez

Before the decision, prosecutors gave a moment-by-moment account of Rivas Hernandez's last night.

As she neared his Hollywood home shortly after 10 p.m. on April 23, 2025, in an Uber he had sent to pick her up, she sent her final text: "girly pop i'm almost there open ur door if ur home."

Prosecutors allege Burke stabbed her to death when she came through the door.

The night before, the two argued via text about his relationship with a woman. She sent him an angry and profanity-riddled text saying she will tell her dad so many lies about him and that she would "end ur career and ur life." She had sent several similar messages around the same time.

Prosecutors said that Burke met Rivas Hernandez when she was 11, began sexually abusing her when she was 13 and he was 18. A year before her death, the pair also exchanged messages about how she had become pregnant — she assured him the baby was his — and that she had an abortion.

During the preliminary hearing, prosecutors introduced photos of the two of them kissing and lying in bed. The pictures showed that she had "David" tattooed in red ink on a finger — one of two that had been cut off when her body was found.

Prosecutors said they have records showing Burke ordered chain saws and wading pools that he used to dismember her body in his garage, and that her DNA was found there on blood stains.

They said he then drove around for weeks and even months with the body in his trunk before the seem-

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ingly abandoned Tesla was towed from the Hollywood Hills.

Defense argues there's insufficient evidence for murder

The defense argued that the evidence didn't show the kind of malice that was required for murder.

"There's no evidence that Mr. Burke harbored a deliberate intent to kill Miss Hernandez," said Burke's attorney, Marilyn Bednarski.

She said the communications between Burke and Rivas Hernandez showed "no threat, no evidence of a history of violence" and that he had "the opposite of homicidal malice" toward her.

She argued that a medical examiner ruling that her death was a homicide from two puncture wounds was too vague and inconclusive to be evidence of murder. The defense did not directly give an alternative theory on how she died and isn't required to.

The defense also established that she had asked seven times to come to see him in the days before her death, and he reluctantly agreed only after she demanded it, and that she had threatened to kill Burke and to mutilate him.

Silverman told the judge that "the defense tried numerous times throughout these proceedings to dirty up the victim" despite her being a child.

Farrell, the detective, also said under defense questioning that the parents of both Burke and Rivas Hernandez knew about their relationship, that he had attended church with members of her family and that her parents had given their consent for her to go to London with him for a week.

Patrick Steinfeld, an attorney for Rivas Hernandez's family said after the hearing that they were "horrified that the defense attorneys brought up evidence to put the blame on a 14-year-old girl."

Her parents sat in the front row through most of the hearing, but sat out some of the more graphic parts and left in the middle of the sexual testimony after her mother began crying.

D4vd's career was reaching new heights at time of killing

D4vd (pronounced "David") became an online musical phenomenon as a teen with a blend of indie rock, R&B and lo-fi pop. He had huge followings on TikTok, Soundcloud and Spotify, where his top songs, including his 2022 breakthrough "Romantic Homicide," have more than a billion plays.

In 2024 he played the Coachella music festival and released his first full-length album, "Withered," two days after authorities say Rivas Hernandez was killed.

Today in History: July 29, USS Forrestal accident

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, July 29, the 210th day of 2026. There are 155 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On July 29, 1967, an accidental rocket launch on the deck of the supercarrier USS Forrestal in the Gulf of Tonkin resulted in a fire and explosions that killed 134 service members.

Also on this date:

In 1836, the newly completed Arc de Triomphe was inaugurated in Paris.

In 1858, the United States and Japan signed the Harris Treaty, formalizing diplomatic relations and trading rights between the two countries.

In 1890, artist Vincent van Gogh, 37, died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound in Auvers-sur-Oise, France.

In 1914, transcontinental telephone service in the U.S. became operational with the first test conversation between New York and San Francisco.

In 1921, Adolf Hitler became the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) Party.

In 1954, the first volume of JRR Tolkien's novel "The Lord of the Rings" ("The Fellowship of the Ring") was published.

In 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency was established.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, creating NASA.

In 1981, Britain's Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer in a glittering ceremony at St. Paul's Ca-

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thedral in London. (They divorced in 1996.)

In 1986, a federal jury in New York found that the National Football League had committed an antitrust violation against the rival United States Football League, but the jury ordered the NFL to pay token damages of just three dollars.

In 1994, abortion opponent Paul Hill shot and killed Dr. John Bayard Britton and Britton's escort, James H. Barrett, outside the Ladies Center clinic in Pensacola, Florida.

In 1999, a former day trader, apparently upset over stock losses, opened fire in two Atlanta brokerage offices, killing nine people and wounding 13 before shooting himself; authorities said Mark O. Barton had also killed his wife and two children.

In 2016, former suburban Chicago police officer Drew Peterson was given an additional 40 years in prison for trying to hire someone to kill the prosecutor who put him behind bars for killing his third wife.

In 2021, a newly arrived Russian science lab briefly knocked the International Space Station out of position when it accidentally fired its thrusters. For 47 minutes, the space station lost control of its orientation when the firing occurred after docking, altering a key position for communications and for getting power from its solar panels.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker is 94. Former Sen. Elizabeth H. Dole is 90. Artist Jenny Holzer is 76. Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns is 73. Style guru Tim Gunn is 73. Rock singer-musician Geddy Lee (Rush) is 73. Rock singer Patti Scialfa (Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band) is 73. Actor Alexandra Paul is 63. Country singer Martina McBride is 60. Actor Wil Wheaton is 54. R&B singer Wanya Morris (Boyz II Men) is 53. Actor Stephen Dorff is 53. Actor Josh Radnor is 52. Hip-hop DJ/music producer Danger Mouse is 49. NFL quarterback Dak Prescott is 33.